

# CRYPT OF CTHULHU



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## *Debatable and Disturbing:* EDITORIAL SHARDS

Here's an irony for you: Dirk W. Mosig is probably the major catalyst for the current boom in Lovecraft scholarship, yet many avid Lovecraftians have never even heard of him. Dr. Mosig, who now teaches psychology at Kearney State College in Nebraska, blazed so intensely in the Lovecraftian firmament that he eventually "burned out" and dropped out of the field, though he assures us that Lovecraft is still his favorite author, and that he still rereads him with pleasure.

In company with Richard L. Tierney, Dirk Mosig helped to scrape away the layers of August Derleth's embellishment on Lovecraft's work. But probably Mosig's greatest accomplishment in the exegesis of Lovecraft was to lay bare the Old Gent's materialistic, nihilistic philosophy and to show how his fiction gains its horrific effect by expressing that philosophy. Perhaps third in importance, and most controversial of all, was his use of Jungian psychology in the exposition of Lovecraft.

This issue of Crypt of Cthulhu features four essays by Dr. Mosig, reprinted from disparate sources to which most readers will probably not have access. "The Great American Throw-Away," Mosig's introduction to Lovecraft and his brief for the position HPL ought rightfully to occupy in literature, first appeared in The Platte Valley Review. A concise summary of Lovecraft's worldview, "The Prophet from Providence," originally appeared in Whispers in December of 1983. "Lovecraft: The Dissonance Factor in Imaginative Literature," in which Mosig draws on a broad range of psychological theorists, and "Poe, Hawthorne, and Lovecraft: Variations on a Theme of Panic" both appeared in Dr. Mosig's fanzine The Miskatonic, published privately for the Esoteric Order of Dagon amateur press association.

Mosig, like Lovecraft, has been a great influence on other writers whom he has taken under his wing. We present memoirs of him by three of his disciples, each now a leading Lovecraft scholar in his own right: S. T. Joshi, Peter Cannon, and Donald R. Burleson.

Robert M. Price, Editor

# The Great American Throw-Away

By Dirk W. Mosig

Born in 1890, in Providence, Rhode Island, he was the author of over sixty short stories, three short novels, and a large number of poems and essays. The excellence of his work, mostly in the macabre and fantastic vein, has earned for him, particularly in European literary circles, the reputation of being the peer, or even the superior, of that other haunted American figure, Edgar Allan Poe. And yet, when he died in 1937, at the early age of 46, it was in relative obscurity, and he is still virtually unknown within the American literary establishment. Most of his fame has been posthumous, and the result of discovery by French, Italian, Spanish, and German critics (although perhaps the latter should not surprise us--after all, it was the French and not the American critics who "discovered" Poe, through the translations of Baudelaire).

Lovecraft's brief life is almost as fascinating as his literary output. A precocious child who learned the alphabet at two, was reading with ease at four, and writing stories at six, and poems at seven, he was raised by a neurotic and overprotective mother after losing his father to a sanitarium at the early age of three. He was a bookish, introverted youth, whose early interest in literature was intermingled with a strong fascination with science, particularly chemistry and astronomy. He learned to speak, think, and write in the language of Alexander Pope and Dr. Johnson by reading through the books in his grandfather's library, and he remained a life-long devotee of the eighteenth century.

He loved colonial architecture, British culture (he regarded himself as a Tory), science and literature, cats, Italian food, and ice cream, which he could ingest in prodigious quantities. He abhorred the cold, and seafood, and detested alien cultural intrusions into his beloved New England.

Ill health in his youth prevented his obtaining a high school diploma, or enrolling at Brown University (where today the major collection of his papers is housed), but he achieved an incredible degree of erudition in a multitude of subjects through his omnivorous reading and his phenomenal memory--an erudition amply reflected in the quality and scope of his voluminous correspondence (he is estimated to have written over 100,000 letters, some over 50 pages long).

He lived most of his life in his native Providence, save for a period of less than two years (1924-1926) in New York (to which he later referred as his "New York exile"), but during his last ten years he undertook extensive antiquarian trips which took him as far north as Quebec (resulting in a fascinating history and travelogue of book-length, published in 1976 as To Quebec and the Stars), south up to Key West, and west to Natchez and New Orleans. His brief marriage, coinciding with his New York exile, was unsuccessful, and ended in an amicable separation a few years later. His many friends remember him as a warm, gentle, cultivated, and likable individual, of great personal charm and unassailable integrity. He was a gentleman, in the best sense of the

word.

Literature was his life, but since he restricted his creative efforts to a relatively narrow genre, he was unable to make a living with his art despite his genius, and was forced to revise the manuscripts of aspiring (but quite often hopeless) writers to eke out his meagre sustenance, living in a state of virtual poverty most of his life.

His artistic integrity commands our respect. He wrote when something within his mind clamored for expression, rather than when his purse-strings required it. Being a perfectionist (as well as his own most severe critic), he spent countless hours revising and rewriting his own manuscripts, constantly searching for the mot juste, until he arrived at a polished product, and yet in later years he expressed dissatisfaction with practically all of his writings. But once he had completed the crafting of one of his stories, he refused to alter it in any way to cater to the whims of his editors, regardless of his condition of financial indigency. He would have rather starved seeing his work remain unpublished than abide by editorial idiosyncrasies or the demands of the marketplace. A believer in "art for art's sake," he wrote strictly to achieve a measure of self-expression and personal satisfaction, regarding any profits as welcome but incidental by-products of his creative efforts, and refusing to prostitute his art.

His rich dream-life was perhaps the main source of ideas for his fantastic stories and a number of his poems--some of the former being actual dream transcriptions (which naturally makes them all that much more interesting from a psychological angle). Philosophically he was a rationalist, a mechanistic materi-

alist who harbored no belief in the supernatural, for which reason it seems paradoxical that he should have produced some of the most effective stories of supernatural horror ever written. But perhaps his success was due precisely to his skeptical frame of mind, for what he wrote were, in a sense, stories for unbelievers. He shifted the source of horror from the traditional but no longer believable ghosts and demons, to the vast and unplumbed abysses beyond space and time, and to the equally unknown recesses of the human mind, thus creating the materialistic tale of supernatural horror. He was, in the words of Fritz Leiber, a "literary Copernicus."

His main goal in writing was to try to achieve "the aesthetic crystallisation of that burning and inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder and oppression which the sensitive imagination experiences upon scaling itself and its restrictions against the vast and provocative abyss of the unknown."<sup>1</sup> His outlook was cosmic; his was not an anthropocentered universe. The cosmos as portrayed in his stories is vast and incomprehensible, and all the more terrifying due to its essential indifference to the trivial accident of organic life, including man. As he pointed out in his brilliant and scholarly survey of the genre, Supernatural Horror in Literature, man's strongest and oldest fear is the fear of the unknown, and this is the emotion Lovecraft manipulates so skillfully in his tales of cosmic outsideness and psychological alienage.

There are a number of themes running through his fiction (e. g., hereditary degeneration, miscegenation, the quest for the impossible dream, psychic possession, death, cosmic intrusion, suspension of natural laws, man's insignificance and

impotence in a mechanistic universe), but essentially all of his tales and novels are interrelated, constituting a literary oeuvre in which the various narratives can be read like the loosely-connected chapters of a gigantic novel. Perhaps the quintessence of his work is best expressed in his own words: "All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. . . . To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. These must be handled with unsparing realism (not catchpenny romanticism), but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown--the shadow-haunted Outside--we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestriality at the threshold."<sup>2</sup>

Two interesting characteristics of Lovecraft's fiction (and to some extent of his poetry) are the utilization of real and imaginary (but eminently realistic) New England locales (to the point that he could almost be regarded as a regional writer) and of his own invented Yog-Sothoth myth-cycle (a pantheon of cosmic forces and entities, complete with cults and forbidden tomes of elder lore, such as the imaginary Necronomicon) mentioned in a number of his works. This pseudo-mythology, together with the fictional milieu of Arkham (with its equally imaginary Miskatonic University, filled with Lovecraft-like scholars), Innsmouth, Kingsport, and Dunwich (a

milieu just as intense as Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County), lend his tales a distinctive and rather unforgettable flavor.

His stories, as well as his poems and essays, are well-written; some of his best work is truly brilliant and memorable. Why, then, has he been so neglected? The reasons for Lovecraft's relative obscurity, particularly in his own country, are several. Perhaps first and foremost is that the bulk of his work was first published either privately in limited-circulation amateur journals (Lovecraft had a life-long involvement with the amateur journalism movement in America), or in pulp magazines (primarily in Weird Tales, although what is perhaps his best story, "The Colour out of Space," was first published in another pulp magazine, Amazing, and two of his other major works appeared in Astounding Stories). For many critics anything published in the pulps was as trashy as the paper on which it was printed (which may indeed be true of most of what appeared there). Regrettably at the time the "slick" or more prestigious magazines did not publish the sort of fiction that Lovecraft was producing, and his choice of subject matter (perhaps necessitated by his personality) severely limited his market as well as his chances for critical acclaim.

Furthermore, American literary critics in general have been rather reluctant to treat fantasy as serious literature, labeling it as escapism and "mere" entertainment. Edmund Wilson, for instance, who dismissed Lovecraft as a writer, at the same time practically indicted the entire fantasy genre. Serious literature must deal with human problems and situations--love, hate, peace, war, agony, ecstasy--and not with the unreal or the impossible. It is this

prejudice, in part, which has prevented serious consideration of Lovecraft's output, although the problem may have been, to some extent, one of taxonomy.

There is a tendency in American literature to apply arbitrary taxonomical standards in a rather Procrustean manner, relegating fictional works to discrete categories, and then dismissing whole genera with pragmatic expediency. A novel or story must be classified as "mainstream," "mystery," "western," "fantasy," "science fiction," "historical romance," or fit in one of the other artificial niches. The procedure has often been detrimental--for instance, works classified as "science fiction" were slow in receiving any critical attention until the last few years, for the entire genre was dismissed as escapist literature unworthy of serious consideration.

Lovecraft's works defy classification. They are not science fiction, for they do not involve extrapolation to possible futures or alternate universes (naturally some elastic definition of science fiction might conceivably cover his works--and perhaps those of Poe, Shakespeare, and Homer!). They are not fantasy tales, in the sense in which J. R. R. Tolkien's are. They are not ghost stories, nor mysteries, nor do they fit into any of the other traditional categories (which has not prevented their being assigned one or more of the above labels and dismissed forthwith). They are simply imaginative stories, the closest parallel to which can be found in the work of those two other American masters of the grotesque and the arabesque, Edgar Poe and Ambrose Bierce, particularly the former's, and in the writings of the Welsh fantasiste Arthur Machen.

European critics, who in general do not seem to suffer of as severe a

case of classificatory compulsiveness as their American counterparts, have been able to treat Lovecraft as a writer (rather than as a writer of science fiction, fantasy, or what not), which perhaps explains in part their more positive reaction to his work.

Still another problem is Lovecraft's language. He was a master of a rich English prose, the like of which is seldom seen today (but which was not at all uncommon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). This writing style was not an affectation--it was his natural mode of expression, a way of talking and thinking which he learned in childhood. Avoiding unnecessary characterization (which he felt would distract attention from the phenomena which he regarded as the real protagonists in his stories), he concentrated on the careful and meticulous build-up of the atmosphere, in part through the skillful use of adjectives of increasing intensity, which often function in his tales like the crescendo in a mad symphony. Lovecraft definitely did not belong to the "nouns & verbs" school of modern writing (in which the overuse of adjectives is anathema), nor is his prose in the least Hemingwayesque. He has been accused of "adjectivitis" and purple prose and dismissed on those accounts. And yet, although concise non-adjectival prose may be ideal for some types of fiction (such as the action or adventure type), it is not necessarily the best mode of expression in every case, particularly not in the kind of narrative depending primarily on atmospheric touches and reflections of psychological moods. More than two-thirds of Lovecraft's stories are told from the first person narrator angle, and the adjectives are most often used to communicate psychological states and reactions in the narrator, a

legitimate usage.

Lovecraft abhorred didacticism in art and literature, and his aim was not to uplift his reader, nor to educate him, but instead to create in him an emotion, a mood of awe or fear. Instead of dealing with problems and their possible solutions, he concerned himself with scenes and phenomena. His was not so much to stimulate the mind as to touch the soul. For a critic convinced that literature must serve a didactic purpose, Lovecraft's works are worthless.

And yet, in spite of the above handicaps, recognition for the work of H. P. Lovecraft seems to be finally coming, however slowly and grudgingly, even in his homeland. In terms of popular acclaim, suffice it to point out that his works are currently in print, in hard covers and in paperback, here as well as in England, having already sold millions of copies, and having been translated to over a dozen foreign languages. But his critical reputation is also on the increase.

A number of books have been written about Lovecraft and his works in recent years, including several long memoirs and a full-length biography (regrettably Lovecraft was the victim of an unsympathetic and schoolmasterish biographer, unable to understand or appreciate his gentleman-aesthete lifestyle--he hardly fared better than Poe under Griswold's cudgel). Several critical studies of his works (including a Monarch Study Note) have also been published. In 1975 the First World Fantasy Convention was held in his honor in Providence (on which occasion the yearly "Howard" awards, named after him, were first presented).

The visibility of academic recognition has also increased. Over a

dozen master's theses and at least four doctoral dissertations (two in Italy, one in France, and one, at LSU, in this country) have been written on his works. With the exception of a couple of reviews in American Literature, Lovecraft was for many years conspicuously absent from the pages of American literary journals, a situation that now seems to be changing, as shown by the appearance of critical studies of his work in journals such as Minnesota Review, Issues at Brown, and Washington & Jefferson's Topic. A Lovecraft Studies is in the planning stages and probably will start publication in 1979. (Serious essays on the Lovecraft oeuvre have also been appearing for some time in several non-academic journals, such as Whispers and Nyctalops.) Several critical studies by academicians are scheduled for publication within the next couple of years, including my own critical-analytical work on Lovecraft for Twayne's U. S. Authors Series and Professor Barton L. St. Armand's "The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft."

But perhaps the most significant tribute and recognition of Lovecraft's stature as an important writer was the recent International Symposium on H. P. Lovecraft held in Trieste, Italy, on June 11-12 of 1977, an event in which I was privileged to participate, together with a number of distinguished critics and colleagues from the continent.

In Italy, France, and several foreign countries, Lovecraft is regarded as one of the most important American writers of the twentieth century (a Spanish critic actually called him one of the ten best writers of the world). He has drawn praise from such internationally recognized critics and literary figures as Michel de Ghelderode, H. C. Artmann,

Emilio Servadio, Rafael Llopis, Maurice Levy, and many others.

It is time that H. P. Lovecraft, a fascinating American original, become a recognized literary figure in his own land. Only time can tell what his final place will be in the history of American letters, but it seems more than likely that this inheritor of the mantle of Poe will prove as lasting as his literary progenitor.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lovecraft, H. P. Selected Letters, Vol. 3, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup>Lovecraft, H. P. Selected Letters, Vol. 2, p. 150.

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# The Prophet from Providence

By Dirk W. Mosig

Howard Phillips Lovecraft has finally achieved what appears to be a secure niche in Anglo-American literature, and is widely acclaimed for his fantastic creations in the worlds of the bizarre and the macabre. In addition, the publication of his brilliant letters is gradually earning him recognition as one of the greatest epistolarians of all time. Nevertheless, one aspect of Lovecraft has remained strangely neglected--his value as a significant thinker.

Lovecraft's greatest forte was perhaps his lucid and objective materialistic philosophy, so well exposed in many of his letters and in essays such as "Idealism and Materialism," "The Materialist Today," "A Confession of Unfaith," "Nietzscheism and Realism," and others. These pieces, expounding his cosmic-minded mechanistic materialism, reveal him as a profound penseur and provide a unique framework for the understanding and interpretation of his memorable fiction.

In his conception of Life, Man, and the Universe, Lovecraft considered himself a realist, in the sense that Richard Upton Pickman was a realist. . . . He abandoned all cherished myths, all explanatory fictions, all dreams and illusions, and faced reality as he perceived it, with utmost objectivity and a total lack of emotional involvement. In this sense he was truly an Outsider, able to become an intellectually detached observer of the futile antics of men and beasts, standing aside and watching the stream of time flow by, like some mythical intelligence from Outside, amused by the abysmal insignificance

of Man and the purposelessness of the cosmos. He coldly analyzed the beliefs in the perfectibility of man, and in science as the panacea of all evils, as well as the naive expectations of a utopic future, and found them equally unfounded on fact. Even though he was a scientist at heart, a rationalist for whom knowledge was the ultimate good, he prophesied with unique insight the general rejection of iconoclastic Science by horrified Man, unwillingly confronted with reality, and desperately refusing to accept the truth about his own meaninglessness and lack of destiny in a mechanistic Universe. As early as 1921, he clearly foresaw what we know today as "future shock," the recoil of Man from the revelations of the future which he is not ready nor willing to accept.

Future shock and man's retreat into insanity or the safety of a new Dark Age were clearly predicted in the introductory paragraph of "The Call of Cthulhu," to which the reader stands referred, as well as in several other tales and passages, long before the publication of Alvin Toffler's bestseller. Consider, for example, the following lines from "Arthur Jermyn":

Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemoniacal hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous. Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species. . . for its reserve of unguessed horrors could never be borne by mortal

brains if loosed upon the world.

For Lovecraft, "the most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents," that is, the avoidance of cognitive dissonance by the compartmentalization and lack of communication between facts stored in the human brain. It is merciful because complete awareness of reality would almost certainly result in mental disintegration and psychosis. The consequences of such an instant of total realization form the theme of one of Lovecraft's early masterpieces, "The Outsider." In this peerless work of philosophical allegory, he grimly prophesied the outcome of Man's confrontation with the revelations of the Future. (For a discussion of several alternative interpretations of this tale, the reader is referred to my paper "The Four Faces of the Outsider," appearing in Nyctalops 9.)

Three main stages are clearly discernible in "The Outsider." The first is the time spent in the subterranean castle, which stands for the PAST. Here the narrator, who represents MAN, lives in the security of ignorance, surrounded by the countless musty books of the great library--the storehouse of mythical lore and budding scientific knowledge accumulated through the ages. Completely unaware of reality, he dreams endlessly of the many marvels to come, of the happiness and blessings promised by the bright pictures in the mouldy volumes, and of the ultimate freedom that must result when the Light of day--the knowledge of Science--dispels the "brooding shadows" of fear and ignorance. His yearning for Light grows so frantic that he decides to climb the single black tower pointing the way to the Utopia that must lie above the "ter-

rible trees" that keep him rooted in the past. His emergence through the monolithic tower into the level ground, symbolizes Man's birth into the PRESENT. The ensuing wanderings under the moonlight represent Man's frantic but hopeful quest for his idealized goals--freedom, happiness, perfection. . . . Man is convinced that all his dreams will come true through the miracles of Science in the not too distant future. The third stage shows Man coming face to face with reality in the Castle of Lights, representing the FUTURE. But the future is not what he expected, and instead of the fabled golden utopia of his dreams, he finds only the most bitter of disappointments. The future has not brought the happiness and security he yearned for, but instead has revealed the reality about Man--a meaningless accident in an unfathomable cosmos, lasting an instant in eternity, devoid of purpose, destiny, dignity, glory. . . . A filthy vermin polluting a grain of sand in a purposeless universe, the abominable disease of a negligible planet that did not exist a moment ago and which will have been forgotten an instant hence--all this, and much more, he sees in his fateful reflection on the mirror of Science with the golden frame of his dreams, in the castle of the Future.

Faced with the unutterable horror of total realization, Man is overwhelmed by the traumatic level of cognitive dissonance, and to reduce it, not only denies reality, but also changes his belief in science, in progress, and in the future. As he madly recoils and tries to regain the lost security of the past, attempting to return to the subterranean castle, he finds the trap door immovable: there is no return. His final flight is into the new freedom of insanity and the security provided by the un-

known feasts of Nitokris--the superstitions of a new Dark Age. . . . The Outsider is alienated Man, "dazed, disappointed, barren, broken," victim of "future shock," condemned to a meaningless existence in the ever changing present, faced with traumatic revelations from which the only escape is self-deception and the regression of psychosis. . . .

Lovecraft did not share the naive humanistic beliefs in the unlimited perfectibility of Man and his unbounded ability to adapt to the revelations of the future. His view of the future went beyond Huxley's and Orwell's in terms of its detached objectivity and cold realism, and he predicted in many of his tales and essays the bleak consequences of man's inability to cope with reality and with the advancing tide of progress.

The accuracy of this pessimistic prophecy and the validity of his critique of progress are attested to today not only by the devastating superabundance of maladaptive reactions to the unbearable stresses of modern life--with mental patients taking up over one-half of all hospital beds--but also by the wholesale escape into the "cancer of superstition," the countless fads of pseudo-mysticism, astrology, palmistry, phrenology, numerology, occultism, religion, witchcraft, voodoo, transcendental meditation, satanism, psychic phenomena, psychedelic drugs . . . anything to regain the lost sense of security, to escape from the cold and unbearable reality emerging like a phoenix from the ashes of the crumbling edifices of traditional beliefs and cherished myths shattered by the efforts of the great iconoclasts: Galileo, Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, Einstein, Skinner, and many others. But it is a barren phoenix, rejected and despised, because the new Dark

Age has already begun. . . . (Parenthetically, it is interesting to observe here that the rejection of Lovecraft's mechanistic materialism by readers of this article is an implicit confirmation of the validity of his prediction.)

Throughout the Lovecraft opus are scattered references to his philosophical Weltanschauung, as well as impressive glimpses of his vivid vision of the intellectual crisis of the future, felt today more than ever before. His works, like those of Franz Kafka, are full of allegories, analogies, parables, and symbols, resulting not from a hollow didacticism, but from the deep undercurrents of philosophical thought which permeate his writings and make them extremely relevant today. The time is right for a greater appreciation of this deeper, more serious aspect of Lovecraft's fiction, as well as of his many philosophical essays, which deserve being collected in a single volume together with excerpts from his prolific correspondence. The ground is particularly ready in Europe, where his works are held in highest esteem. For instance, two recent collections of Lovecraft's tales published in Spain appeared in a literary series including works by Nietzsche, Unamuno, Freud, Malthus, Pavlov, Jung, Kafka, Kant, Schopenhauer, Karl Marx, Bertrand Russell, and others.

Ultimately, Lovecraft's fame should rest not only on his value as a master of dramatic fiction, a skilled poet, and a brilliant epistolarian, but also on the depth and significance of the philosophical insights of his superior intellect.

[First appeared in Whispers, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 1973.] \*

# Lovecraft: The Dissonance Factor in Imaginative Literature

By Dirk W. Mosig

Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory has had a remarkable heuristic influence in the field of psychology over the past twenty years. It has generated a tremendous amount of research, and quite often rather ingenious experiments have contributed to an expanded understanding of the modus operandi of cognitive mechanisms involved in the alleviation of psychological dissonance--the latter acting as a drive like hunger, which must be reduced. The present paper attempts to apply dissonance theory in the field of literature. It is the contention of the present author that the theory provides an ideal framework to explicate the reasons for the disturbing emotional impact achieved by certain works of imaginative literature, especially the stories and novels of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). Cognitive dissonance theory can provide a conceptual reinterpretation of the primary characteristics of the Lovecraftian tale of supernatural horror and cosmic alienage.

Cognitive dissonance is a harsh, grating, inharmonious feeling resulting from psychological inconsistencies, i. e., from a clash or conflict between two ideas or between beliefs and behavior. When two ideas do not agree, or actually contradict each other, they are said to be in a state of dissonance. The same occurs when our behavior is inconsistent with our beliefs, or when events unexpectedly contravene our expectations. Once dissonance occurs, it must be reduced, whether it be by

changing ideas, beliefs, perceptions, or behaviors; in other words, it is a motivating state, and the tension associated with it can be reduced by returning to a state of cognitive consonance or psychological harmony. As Leon Festinger puts it, in his much referred Scientific American paper,

to understand cognitive dissonance as a motivating state, it is necessary to have a [clear] conception of the conditions that produce it. The simplest definition of dissonance can, perhaps, be given in terms of a person's expectations. In the course of our lives we have all accumulated a large number of expectations about what things go together and what things do not. When such an expectation is not fulfilled, dissonance occurs. For example, a person standing unprotected in the rain would expect to get wet. If he found himself in the rain and he was not getting wet, there would exist dissonance between these two pieces of information.<sup>1</sup>

Festinger goes on to point out that in a case such as that, everyone's expectations would be similar; in other words, we would all expect to get wet if standing in the rain without an umbrella or some other protection. Naturally such uniformity of expectations is not a rule applicable to every instance; there are many cases in which the expectations of different persons would be at vari-

ance, as when one person expects to fail while another is confident of success, although both are facing the same task. Nevertheless, the case in which expectations are relatively uniform is particularly relevant to the present discussion. The kind of imaginative or fantastic literature labeled as "weird fiction" by H. P. Lovecraft and by other writers active in the genre depends for its effect on the portrayal of violations of natural law, and it is especially with regard to natural law that our expectations tend to be uniform.

In his scholarly monograph, Supernatural Horror in Literature, Lovecraft discusses the aesthetic theory of the weird story, and stresses that in "the true weird tale"

there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain--a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.<sup>2</sup>

If one were to translate the above into dissonance theory language, one could state that for Lovecraft the essential ingredient of the weird tale is a contravention of uniform reader expectations concerning the accepted or assumed order and lawfulness of the cosmos--"all that peace and balance which the normal mind possesses through its accustomed conception of external nature and nature's law"<sup>3</sup>--in other words, a dissonance-inducing conception. Such dissonant element must be advanced within the framework of extreme verisimilitude if it is to be effective, and when this occurs the dissonance is often accompanied by an effect of

awe, fear, or both. Let us examine these two characteristics more closely.

Extreme verisimilitude is essential because there can hardly be any dissonance where a willing suspension of disbelief is not elicited in the reader, and such suspension of disbelief is not likely unless the crafting of the weird tale be approached as the construction of a careful hoax. Lovecraft was well aware of this circumstance, and clarified his own writing procedure in his essay, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction":

In writing a weird story I always try very carefully to achieve the right mood and atmosphere, and place the emphasis where it belongs. One cannot [effectively] present an account of impossible, improbable, or inconceivable phenomena as a commonplace narrative of objective acts and conventional emotions. Inconceivable events and conditions have a special handicap to overcome, and this can be accomplished only through the maintenance of a careful realism in every phase of the story except that touching on the one given marvel. This marvel must be treated very impressively and deliberately--with a careful emotional "build-up"--else will seem flat and unconvincing.<sup>4</sup>

In another of his essays, Lovecraft explains the nature of the "special handicap," and elaborates further:

Inconceivable events and conditions form a class apart from all other story elements, and cannot be made convincing by any mere process of casual narration. They have the handicap of incredibility

to overcome; and this can be accomplished only through a careful realism in every other phase of the story. . . . The emphasis, too, must be kept right--hovering always over the wonder of the central abnormality itself. It must be remembered that any violation of what we know as natural law is in itself a far more tremendous thing than any other event or feeling which could possibly affect a human being. . . . Over and above everything else should tower the stark, outrageous monstrosity of the one chosen departure from nature. The characters should react to it as real people would react to such a thing if it were suddenly to confront them in daily life; displaying the almost soul-shattering amazement which anyone would naturally display. . . .<sup>5</sup>

There is obviously quite a bit of psychological insight in the above excerpt. The contravention of natural law, or rather, of the expectations associated with it, would indeed lead to a state of "soul-shattering" dissonance, but such state could only be reached where disbelief is suspended and the dissonant event not merely rejected as false or preposterous. (Such rejection, of course, would be a most effective dissonance-reduction or dissonance-avoidance mechanism in itself!) By approaching the weird narrative with extreme realism, the indispensable framework of credibility is more likely to be achieved, for if everything in the story appears to be natural and believable, the unnatural event will tend to be perceived as a departure from expected reality occurring in a real world. This sort of tale is bound to be more disturbing psychologically (i. e., will produce a greater departure from cog-

nitive consonance, due to the greater contrast between expectancy-fulfilling and expectancy-violating elements) than a story dealing entirely with impossible or fantastic events, or taking for granted a string of unlikely occurrences, for in the latter cases no expectations concerning reality are likely to have been associated with the narrative, nor to be unsettled by the disclosure of the climactic events.

But if the skillfully crafted weird story derives its disturbing effect from the production of cognitive dissonance in the reader, by exposing him to an expectancy-violating conception within a carefully constructed framework of expectancy-fulfilling events, and dissonance acts as a drive that must be reduced or avoided, what will happen to the reader experiencing such a state of psychological inconsistency? As a matter of fact, it would seem fair to ask why anyone should actively seek out this sort of dissonance-inducing literature in the first place! The answer, though, is quite simple. Although the reader has suspended disbelief while exposing himself to the tale, he can always close the book and reduce the dissonance by telling himself, "it was only a story." As a matter of fact, he knows beforehand that what he is going to read is only fiction, and therefore feels safe and unthreatened when he seeks out a specimen of this type of literature--perhaps what he seeks and experiences is a thrill akin to the one a child derives from going to the zoo and watching the ferocious lions, knowing that he is safe on the other side of the bars. And yet, breaking the spell by closing the book and reassuring oneself that it was only fiction does not seem completely to eliminate the dissonance produced by one of the masterpieces in this genre (a number of

Lovecraft's best stories could be given as typical examples)--some of the tension lingers on, and is responsible for the disturbing story standing out in memory and acquiring an "unforgettable" quality. Perhaps this is so in part because the recollection of the tale recreates a measure of dissonance and perpetuates the process--in the words of one of the characters in the novel At the Mountains of Madness, "there are some experiences and intimations which scar too deeply to permit healing, and leave only such an added sensitiveness that memory re-inspires all the original horror."<sup>6</sup> (A typical comment often made by readers of Lovecraft's works is that certain scenes and events from his stories keep haunting them for extended periods of time; the present writer recalls being disturbed for a long time by the reading of Lovecraft's "The Colour out of Space," a feeling that led to his rediscovery of the author thirteen years after his initial exposure to that particular tale!)

And yet, there is more to the effect of a masterpiece of weird literature than the believable portrayal of an unbelievable event, resulting in dissonance, and more to the long-lasting effect of such a tale than an unreduced dissonance-residue being bolstered by renewed dissonance induced by the recollection of the narrative. The lingering effect seems to be related to an affective component, usually of awe or fear (including the mixture of the two we know as "terror," and the amalgamation of fear with loathing and revulsion that receives the name of "horror"). This emotional component seems to accompany the motivational state of dissonance elicited by such expectancy-contravening literature. What is the nature of the stimulus eliciting such affective reactions?

For Lovecraft, the unknown is the most effective fear-eliciting element of the weird tale. "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind"--he argues--"is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."<sup>7</sup> He further elaborates in his "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," pointing out that:

these stories frequently emphasize the element of horror because fear is our deepest and strongest emotion, and the one which best lends itself to the creation of nature-defying illusions. Horror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage and "outsidedness" without laying stress on the emotion of fear.<sup>8</sup>

Not only does the unknown act as a fear-eliciting stimulus which accompanies the dissonance related to its element of incongruity, but its incorporation into the weird narrative enhances the believability of the depiction of the transgression of natural law, which in turn elicits the critical level of cognitive dissonance that distinguishes the masterpiece from an ineffective piece of hack-work.

Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, in his celebrated essay on the "uncanny" suggests that the power of the weird narrative derives, not from fear of the unknown, but from fear of the known, in other words, from that which was once known, and which, having been repressed into the unconscious, threatens now to become conscious once again.<sup>9</sup> In his discussion of the etymology of the German word "Unheimlich," he points out that it is is the name for every-

thing that ought to have remained . . . hidden and secret and has become visible"<sup>10</sup> (an observation that reminded the present writer of Lovecraft's famous lines describing the monster in "The Outsider," "it was the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide"<sup>11</sup> . . .). He further suggests that:

if psychoanalytic theory is correct in maintaining that every emotional effect . . . is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety, there must be a class in which the anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs. This class of morbid anxiety would then be no other than what is uncanny, irrespective of whether it originally aroused dread or some other effect.<sup>12</sup>

In the same paper Freud postulates a principle of repetition-compulsion in the unconscious mind,

based upon instinctual activity and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts--a principle powerful enough to overrule the pleasure-principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character . . . whatever reminds us of this inner repetition-compulsion is perceived as uncanny.<sup>13</sup>

Who is right? Is the weird, the uncanny, disturbing because of its unknown or alien qualities, as Lovecraft seemed to believe, or does it elicit fear because it threatens to restore to consciousness "nothing new or foreign, but something familiar . . . that has been estranged only by the process of repression"<sup>14</sup>? Cognitive dissonance theory sheds light on this apparent contradiction.

The strange, the eldritch, the bizarre, has a jarring effect (i.e., produces dissonance) not because it represents something known, or because it is unknown, but because in either case it violates a set of psychological expectations. In a sense, both Freud and Lovecraft were right. The return of the repressed is anxiety-inducing, because it contravenes a person's beliefs and perceptions of his past experiences and behavior. And confrontation with the unknown in the form of an incomprehensible violation of natural law does elicit fear, because it represents the inadmissible and intolerable shattering of fundamental expectations that give a person's phenomenological perception of "reality" a necessary dimension of safety and security. Perhaps we should say, then, that what both cases have in common is not fear of the known or fear of the unknown, but dissonance-induced fear.

Since both known and unknown elements can contribute to the total dissonance, it seems reasonable to suggest that a tale in which the two are present should have a heightened disturbing and emotional effect. Is this the case in Lovecraft's most effective uncanny narratives? Even a cursory examination reveals that such is indeed the case, and that Lovecraft was well aware of the efficacy of the expectation-contravening "known" as a fear-inducing stimulus. This is particularly evident in the story "The Outsider," in which the hapless narrator, thinking that he is confronting "the unmentionable monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to a herd of delirious fugitives," throws out his hand to ward off the apparition, only to touch the cold surface of a mirror:

. . . in that same second there

crashed down upon my mind a single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory. I knew in that second all that had been. . . . I recognized most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering before me. . . . [but] in the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images. 15

Here the return of repressed memories is quite explicitly stated, and fear of the known is exquisitely blended with fear of the unknown (the narrator appears to be a reanimated corpse). In quite a few other Lovecraft stories dissonance-induction seems to be related both to elements of the "known" and of the "unknown" or to the unknown from within as well as to the unknown from without (e.g., "The Rats in the Walls," "The Horror at Red Hook," "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Thing on the Doorstep," At the Mountains of Madness, and many more). It has been suggested<sup>16</sup> that the disturbing effect of these narratives can be tied to the incorporation of archetypal motifs into the stories, or rather, to the fact that the tales seem to be built around archetypal symbols and images. Confrontation with such unconscious contents would naturally conflict with conscious assumptions and expectations, resulting in dissonance, and such threat to inner safety would lead to anxiety and allied effects.

The above suggests other lines of speculation. It is well known that Lovecraft utilized his dreams as a primary source of inspiration for a number of his tales and poems, to the point that he could justly be called an oeneric writer. Within psychoanalytic theory, dreams are mechanisms of wish-fulfillment controlled

by unconscious instinctual forces, and they can be perceived or remembered consciously only in a distorted manner, due to the action of cathectic censorship barriers; the latter functioning to avoid the anxiety that would result from a direct confrontation with the undiluted primary process mechanisms of the id. Consequently most dreams appear to be quite innocent and are minimally disturbing.

Yet Lovecraft reported having particularly vivid and disturbing dreams. Could this have been due to a partially ineffective cathectic barrier, and if so, what could have been the cause of such cathectic failure and conscious sensitivity? Perhaps an interesting answer can be suggested if we allow ourselves the liberty of borrowing a conception Jungian or analytical theory (within which dreams are also regarded as direct manifestations of the unconscious), hopefully without losing sight of the primary concern of this paper. Lovecraft was permanently separated from his father when he was only a little over two and a half years old, the latter being hospitalized, a victim of paresis (he died in the same institution five years later). This father absence was in part remedied by the child finding an ersatz father in the form of his maternal grandfather. Keeping this biographical detail in mind, let us turn now to a theory advanced by Edward F. Edinger:

When the personal father is missing, there is no layer of personal experience to mediate between the ego and the numinous image of the archetypal father. A kind of hole is left in the psyche through which emerge the powerful archetypal contents of the collective unconscious. Such a condition is a se-

rious danger. It threatens inundation of the ego by the dynamic forces of the unconscious causing disorientation and loss of relation to external reality. If, however, the ego can survive this danger, the hole in the psyche becomes a window providing insight into the depths of being.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not one accepts Edinger's hypothesis regarding the psychic sensitization or "window" to unconscious elements that could result in connection with such father absence (in Lovecraft's case perhaps overcome through his relation with the figure of his grandfather), the fact remains that Lovecraft did find his dreams extremely vivid and disturbing--or shall we say, dissonant?--and it seems likely that some form of dissonance-reduction had to be the outcome. In psychoanalytic language, we could say that as a function of his creative genius, he sublimated his nightmares into art; within a dissonance theory framework, we can see that he reduced the dissonance by transforming his disturbing dreams into tales and poems, and by denying them any objective reality or significance. In the same way in which a reader of his words can deal with the "soul-shattering" contraventions of natural law (and the associated expectations) by closing the book and sighing with relief, "it was only a story," Lovecraft was able to live and even thrive with his vivid dreams-imagery by making "only a story" out of such oneiric experiences--essentially the same dissonance-reduction mechanism being involved in both cases. It is also clear that Lovecraft denied his dreams--and dreaming in general--any psychological significance, specifically rejecting the notion of racial memories or archetypes ex-

pressing themselves in dreams:

As for the nature of dreams--I think there is no question but that they consist of dissociated scraps of previous impressions (some utterly forgotten and ordinarily deeply buried in the subconscious) regrouped by the undisciplined sleeping fancy into new and sometimes utterly unfamiliar forms. Their surface aspect is strange, yet every basic ingredient is something the mind has picked up at one time or another . . . from books, pictures, experiences, etc. I don't believe in hereditary memory at all. Acquired characteristics are not ordinarily inherited; and even if they were, they would be merely general tendencies--certainly not the special, individualised impressions involved in that curious sense of unaccountable familiarity which some scenes or dreams awake in us.<sup>18</sup>

Lovecraft may of course have been quite right concerning the nature of dreams, but whether or not this be the case, it is obvious that such conscious attitude would have contributed to the further reduction of any dissonance associated with his oneiric experiences, including the "unaccountable familiarity" produced by some of his dreams.

When one reads Lovecraft, one is often struck by the honesty that seems to characterize most of his unnerving pieces of weird literature. It has been pointed out<sup>19</sup> that this characteristic of his work can be related to the fact that rather than catering to the whims of the marketplace or to the demands of the purse-strings, he only wrote when the visions and dreams clamored for expression, in other words, when he experienced a genuine state of dis-

sonance which he then reduced by transforming the visions into art.

But Lovecraft was not merely a writer of imaginative fiction and speculative poetry; as we have noted from his theoretical discussions of the weird tale, he was also a very perceptive observer of human reactions and emotions. In addition he was a philosopher and a thinker of no mean stature, a fact that is often ignored. This is particularly unfortunate because a complete understanding of his fictional oeuvre is not possible without comprehending his metaphysical stand--his tales and poems are in a sense manifestations of his Weltanschauung and are permeated by some very definite philosophical undercurrents which give the oeuvre unity and coherence. No discussion of Lovecraft can be complete or satisfactory without an examination of his serious thinking; consequently it behooves us to examine some of his philosophical ideas within the cognitive dissonance framework.

Lovecraft was a rationalistic thinker, who endorsed an indifferent view of the cosmos, within a mechanistic-materialistic Weltansicht.

I am not a pessimist but an indifferentist--that is, I don't make the mistake of assuming that the resultant of the natural forces surrounding and governing organic life will have any connexion with the wishes or tastes of any part of that organic life-process. Pessimists are just as illogical as optimists. . . . both schools retain in a vestigial way the primitive concept of a conscious teleology--of a cosmos which gives a damn one way or the other about the special wants and ultimate welfare of mosquitoes, rats, lice, dogs, men, horses, pterodactyls,

trees, fungi, dodos, or other forms of biological energy.<sup>20</sup>

Although he perceived the universe as being neither favorable nor inimical to the trivial accident of organic life called man, and regarded human existence as essentially meaningless in a purposeless cosmos, he was pessimistic about man's ability to tolerate such a bleak and unadorned vision of reality. This is a concern that often found expression in his fiction, providing one of the primary philosophical themes of his literary output--a point which becomes quite meaningful within dissonance theory and which once again reveals his perspicacity as an observer of his fellow men.

One of the best examples of Lovecraft's pessimism regarding man's ability to tolerate an unflattering (i.e., dissonant) view of reality occurs in the words of Francis Wayland Thurston, the narrator in "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), the opening paragraph reading:

The most merciful thing in the world . . . is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live in a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we will either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.<sup>21</sup>

If the above words are taken to

mirror the author's concern, one might add that if Lovecraft is right in assuming that man's inability to correlate the contents of his mind is merciful, then man's ability to reduce the dissonance created by the partial psychological correlations he is able to achieve must be regarded as an even more "merciful" characteristic, although the consequences of the same may at times be unfortunate. Translated into dissonance theory language, what Lovecraft is saying is that there are levels of dissonance so painful, so frightening, so traumatic, that extreme and radical dissonance-reduction mechanisms will come into play whenever such levels are reached. He indicates that eventually the piecing together of scientific knowledge will result in a vision of reality, and of man's utterly insignificant and meaningless position in the universe, so dissonant with fundamental human beliefs and expectations, that man, unable to tolerate such "soul-annihilating" cognitive discrepancy, will either totally deny, falsify, and reject such view of reality (in the process rejecting also science, the method instrumental in opening such horrifying vistas), plunging headlong into a new era of obscurantism and safety-inducing superstition, or will simply be the victim of a psychotic breakdown--a breakdown consisting essentially of a total denial and loss of contact with traumatic reality. Extreme dissonance-reduction mechanisms, indeed, and a bleak perspective!

Although Lovecraft was obviously ahead of his time, his insights into the detrimental effects of new knowledge have not been entirely unique. Alvin Toffler, more recently, implied essentially the same thing in his book, Future Shock. In the language of the theory, man's confron-

tation with sudden change, too rapid progress, or radically new pictures of reality violates his assumptions and expectations and results in levels of cognitive dissonance which must be reduced. The greater and more unexpected the change, the greater and more painful the dissonance, and the more urgent its reduction. As Festinger points out,<sup>22</sup> when two ideas are in a state of dissonance there will be pressure for one or both of them to change; when an item of information clashes with our beliefs, we can minimize the importance of the datum in question, distort the information, deny its existence, or we can change our belief. But beliefs die hard, particularly beliefs to which we have become firmly committed, and even more so if the commitment has been one that was made without sufficient justification. It is often easier to reject the dissonant information, to ridicule and downplay its importance or its validity, or to reduce the dissonance by seeking the social support of others who agree with us. There is security in numbers; the more there are who will agree with us, the less we are likely to opt for the other avenue of dissonance reduction, namely the discarding of obsolete beliefs and the acceptance of a new vision of reality. Lovecraft indeed seems to question whether most people, if not all, are able to accept a highly dissonant vision of reality without "going mad from the revelation." Naturally if the threatened belief is trivial or unimportant it can be given up quite readily, but this is hardly the case with an idea which is central or critical in our existence, such as the belief in the meaningfulness of our lives and the existence of a purpose in the universe (although our acquiring such beliefs is merely the result of the accident of birth plus a

process of social conditioning). These are so pivotal in most people that any other avenue of dissonance-reduction is more likely to be attempted--even insanity itself.

It would seem that regrettably Lovecraft was not too pessimistic in predicting the coming of a new dark age, if we regard as trends toward the latter all the current and frantic fads and obsessions with security-inducing superstitions and supportive beliefs--the renewed interest in astrology, the occult, religion, witchcraft, chemical dependencies, the paranormal, and the countless cults springing up everywhere--all the psychological props and crutches providing cognitive consonance. We have all seen the sorry spectacle of masses of "believers" clinging desperately to assorted explanatory fictions and doctrines, and practicing a myriad of safety-fostering rituals (some not at all unlike the ones engaged in by the Cthulhu cultists in some of Lovecraft's ironic stories). The recent tragedy of the People's Temple incident in Guyana has robbed us of the soothing and self-deceptive assumption that all such trends are essentially harmless, and an objective observer might be amused to notice how we still try to reduce our own dissonance by attempting to isolate the tragic event and by providing countless "explanations" for the mass suicide. One is startled to realize that if the trend continues, the new dark age envisioned by Lovecraft (himself a scientific rationalist) may be here much sooner than he expected, and one might soberly add that although such a new era could provide safety and cognitive consonance for the masses through some level of psychological conformity, its horrors are likely to pale those of the Middle Ages and of Lovecraft's nightmares combined.

But perhaps it is not too late to reverse the trend, and there is reason for hope. Certainly theories such as that of cognitive dissonance are encouraging signs, for they provide us with consistent frameworks to understand human behavior, and can serve as springboards to attempt to modify or influence the actions of man--perhaps the new dark age can still be averted. However insidious, automatic, or unconscious the operation of dissonance-reduction mechanisms, our awareness of their action in shaping our decisions, perceptions, and behaviors cannot but help to enhance our chances to control the direction of such changes.

The above divagations seem to have taken us far from the literary field in examining some of Lovecraft's philosophical ideas and their relevance and implications within cognitive dissonance theory. In concluding with our discussion of this aspect of Lovecraft's work, it may be worthwhile to point out that Lovecraft's rationalistic outlook, far from being paradoxical in view of his fictional thematic predilections, is extremely consistent with the same. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that the reason why Lovecraft felt that a violation of natural law was the "most terrible conception of the human brain" was precisely a consequence of his scientific orientation--it was simply the most impossible, the most disturbing, and the most dissonant conception imaginable for a materialistic thinker, and consequently the ideal core element in a weird narrative. A total unbeliever in the supernatural, Lovecraft wrote his own brand of "supernatural" fiction for unbelievers, succeeding in eliciting dissonance in persons who would have been left unmoved by the ghosts and phantoms of traditional Gothic fiction.

To summarize, we have reached the following conclusions in this paper. First, weird fiction, such as that written by H. P. Lovecraft, depends for its effect on dissonance resulting from the depiction of a contravention of fairly universal expectations concerning natural law. Second, the effective weird tale is one in which the departure from natural law is presented within a context of extreme verisimilitude to achieve a willing suspension of disbelief, necessary for dissonance-induction in the reader. Third, although people read weird fiction because they seek a "safe" thrill, in the case of a particularly effective weird narrative closing the book and stressing the fictional nature of the stimulus fails to reduce all the dissonance; some tension remains and is in part responsible for the tale standing out in the memory later. Fourth, an effective piece of weird fiction produces also a concomitant effect of awe or fear, which is tied to the dissonance produced by the violation of expectations concerning either external reality or the person's own past history and personality; in other words, the effect is dissonance-induced. Fifth, it is a characteristic of particularly disturbing weird tales that they contain both elements of the known and of the unknown as critical stimuli. Sixth, an oneiric writer, finding his dreams a source of dissonance, may attempt to reduce the dissonance by transforming his dreams into art and by denying them objective significance. And seventh, both as an observer of human behavior and as a philosopher, Lovecraft reveals unusual insight when his remarks are viewed within a dissonance theory framework; furthermore, the author's philosophy finds expression in his literary oeuvre and is critical for an understanding

of the same.

It should be obvious at this point that cognitive dissonance theory does provide an excellent framework to study and understand the impact produced by certain works of imaginative literature and to reinterpret some of the literary, psychological, and philosophical insights of one of its major exponents. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate further explorations in this domain.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Leon Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance," Scientific American, October, 1962, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1964), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Marginalia (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1944), pp. 138-139.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 140-141 (in "Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction").

<sup>6</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Marginalia, p. 135.

<sup>9</sup>Sigmund Freud, On Creativity and the Unconscious (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 122-161.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, The Dunwich Horror and Others (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1963), p. 58.

<sup>12</sup>Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup>*ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, The Dunwich Horror and Others, p. 58.

<sup>16</sup>E. g., Barton L. St. Armand,

The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977) and Dirk W. Mosig, "Toward a Greater Appreciation of H. P. Lovecraft: The Analytical Approach," in Gahan Wilson (ed.), First World Fantasy Awards (New York: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 290-301.

<sup>17</sup>Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1973), p. 132.

<sup>18</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Dreams and Fancies (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1962), pp. 42-43.

#### MOSIG AT LAST (continued from page 35)

out foundation or were merely arrived at through arbitrary perspectives and little understanding of Lovecraft's own motives. In this regard I still feel myself a pupil of Dirk's, for I still maintain the above tenets and am still trying to pursue them in greater detail; and if I have gone deeper than Dirk in some matters, it is only because Dirk so clearly showed the way and guided me by the hand for so long.

In a way his own published work does not begin to reflect his comprehensive grasp of Lovecraft; only a selection of the best of his correspondence (and there is much that can be termed the best) could do justice to his erudition, and only those who met and talked with him in his prime will understand why he will always be the greatest of Lovecraft scholars. I have spoken of him largely in the past tense in this essay because he has been inactive in the field for some years and will probably remain so; but if ever anyone writes the history of Lovecraft studies, then he will be compelled--as Lovecraft was compelled to de-

<sup>19</sup>Dirk W. Mosig, "The Great American Throw-Away," Platte Valley Review, 6:1 (April 1978), p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, Selected Letters, Vol. 3 (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1971), p. 39.

<sup>21</sup>H. P. Lovecraft, The Dunwich Horror and Others, p. 130.

<sup>22</sup>Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957).

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vote an entire chapter in Supernatural Horror in Literature to Poe as the turning-point in the horror field --to devote a large chapter to the achievements of Dirk W. Mosig, who has made so much of modern Lovecraft scholarship possible by example and precept.

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# Poe, Hawthorne, and Lovecraft:

## VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF PANIC

By Dirk W. Mosig

Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and H. P. Lovecraft are often regarded as the three greatest American masters of the tale of terror. Their styles have been often compared and contrasted, for their work shows striking similarities as well as fundamental differences.

While Poe and Hawthorne were contemporaries, Lovecraft's writings followed theirs almost a century later. There is little doubt that both Poe and Hawthorne influenced Lovecraft. The latter called Poe his "God of fiction" and Poe's influence can be traced in a number of his stories (e. g., "The Tomb," "The Hound," "The Outsider," "Pickman's Model," "Cool Air," "The Colour out of Space," "The Rats in the Walls," and the short novel At the Mountains of Madness, which is a sequel to the Narrative of A. Gordon Pym). Hawthorne's connection with Salem and the witch trials never ceased to fascinate Lovecraft; echoes of The House of the Seven Gables can be found in his own "The Dreams in the Witch House." Lovecraft devoted extensive sections of his scholarly monograph Supernatural Horror in Literature to a very sympathetic and perceptive discussion of both of his predecessors, dedicating several paragraphs to Hawthorne and an entire chapter to Poe.

In 1921, in all likelihood soon after the demise of his mother at Butler Hospital for the Insane, in Providence, Rhode Island, Lovecraft penned one of his most remarkable short stories, "The Outsider." Despite obvious autobiographical ele-

ments, this tale owes much to Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" and "William Wilson," and to Hawthorne's "Journal of a Solitary Man." In the story, the narrator, who has escaped from an underground crypt, attempts to join a merry crowd in a castle to him vaguely familiar. The revellers react with terror, but he does not realize that it was he who caused the panic, even when he sees his own "bone-revealing outlines" in a large mirror (which he mistakes for the entrance to "somewhat similar room"), until he touches "the cold and unyielding surface of polished glass." The parallels with the Hawthorne and Poe stories are obvious.

In each of the three stories, "The Masque of the Red Death," "Journal of a Solitary Man," and "The Outsider," there is a scene of panic, a moment when a group or multitude reacts with terror or horror to the presence of the disturbing intruder. An examination of how Poe, Hawthorne, and Lovecraft handled this scene is the purpose of this paper.

In Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," the image of group terror is conveyed gradually, over several paragraphs, and even the last lines of the tale relate to it. The key lines and sentences contributing to communicate the reaction of the crowd gathered in Prince Prospero's castle (and those of the ill-fated Prince himself) are the following:

. . . become aware of the presence of a masked figure . . . there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, ex-

pressive of disapprobation and surprise--then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

. . . the vast assembly, as with impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls . . . none followed him [Prince Prospero] on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. . . there was a sharp cry . . . gasped in unutterable horror . . . one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall.

The reaction of the "whole company" is gradual--disapproval, surprise, terror, horror, disgust, avoidance, then anger (as they assail the masked presence following Prospero's fall) and "unutterable horror" (as they find no tangible body or face under the mask and robe of the intruder), and finally despair, facing the inevitability of death. An entire mosaic of shifting emotions has been portrayed, but the prevailing impression is one of horror and disgust, more than of fear and terror. The revellers do not run in a frantic but futile attempt to escape. They back away, nauseated, even angry. It is not until the last moment that they fall under the icy grip of fear, as they collapse in their final posture of despair.

The entire description is concerned with the reactions of the group. Poe does not give us samples of individual reactions, other than Prince Prospero's, who angrily follows the masked presence, dagger in hand, only to drop the weapon with "a sharp cry" when the intruder turns around to face him. The "vast assembly" reacts in unison, in concert, for the Red Death seems to have impressed everyone

equally. What we view is the universal reaction of a group, rather than an amalgamation of individual responses.

The panic scene in Hawthorne's fragment is quite different in several ways. It does not take place in a castle, but in the open street. The power of the description hinges primarily on the portrayal of individual rather than group reactions. The narrator himself is the center of attention and the source of horror:

By degrees . . . I perceived myself the object of universal attention, and, as it seemed, of horror and affright. Every face grew pale; the laugh was hushed, and the voices died away in broken syllables; the people in the shops crowded to the doors with a ghastly stare, and the passengers on all sides fled as from an embodied pestilence. The horses reared and snorted. An old beggar-woman sat before St. Paul's church, with her withered palm stretched out to all, but drew it back from me, and pointed to the . . . churchyard. Three lovely girls whom I had formerly known, ran shrieking across the street. A personage in black . . . a long-lost friend . . . gave me a look of horror and was gone.

I . . . threw my eyes on a looking glass . . . I awoke, with a horrible sensation of self-horror and self-loathing . . . I had been promenading . . . in my shroud!

Here we find flight as well as "ghastly stares," hushed laughter, and passive avoidance. Even the horses react to the presence, an effective touch. We can visualize the old beggar-woman, withdrawing her hand and pointing to the slabs and

tombstones in the cemetery, where the intruder seems to belong. It is an almost comic touch--the old crone, being so close to death herself, showing little actual fear, but resenting the intrusion. The girls run away, shrieking, while the people in the shops gather to stare with morbid curiosity. There is terror, there is loathing, there is disapproval. The effect is universal, but the reactions are individual and different. We perceive, not a mob, but a diversity of human beings, each reacting in his or her personal and characteristic way. The fragment culminates with the narrator's perception (upon seeing his own reflection) of the reason for his being the object of such unwanted "universal attention." He had clearly known that it was he who had elicited the fear reactions, but not why, and the realization makes him awake with a sensation of self-horror and disgust, a reaction that is stated but not elaborated upon. It had all been a terrible dream.

In Lovecraft's "The Outsider," the panic scene takes place in a castle, as in Poe's story. But here the intruder does not wander or promenade through the various rooms of the castle, filling the spectators with revulsion. He merely steps into the "brilliantly lighted room" through a "low window," and the impact of his presence is felt the instant he crosses the threshold:

... as I entered, there occurred immediately one of the most terrifying demonstrations I had ever conceived. Scarcely had I crossed the sill when there descended upon the whole company a sudden and unheralded fear of hideous intensity, distorting every face and evoking the most horrible screams from nearly every throat. Flight was universal, and

in the clamor and panic several fell in a swoon and were dragged away by their madly fleeing companions. Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape, overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors.

The cries were shocking; and as I stood in the brilliant apartment alone and dazed, listening to their vanishing echoes, I trembled at the thought of what might be lurking near me unseen . . . the . . . monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to a herd of delirious fugitives.

As in Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," it is the "whole company" which is affected simultaneously, but the effect is not gradual, and does not consist of an oscillation among various emotional states. Abject, utter terror is instant and universal; the intruder is not perceived merely as a source of nausea and disgust, but as a menace to sanity itself. We do not have here the horror, anger, and disgust painted by Poe, nor the mixture of loathing, fear, and curiosity presented by Hawthorne, but sheer hysteria and delirious panic. The apparition is madness itself--it cannot be stared at. People cover their eyes, to blot out the insane vision, and crash blindly into walls and furniture in their frantic and hysterical attempts to escape, or faint to avoid consciousness of the unbearable vision, and are mercifully (and mechanically) carried away by their "madly fleeing" companions. Lovecraft portrays the reactions of a multitude, a mob in the grip of total, insane terror, and not of a group of

individuals, each reacting in a personal way. When he gives us specific reactions, these are of segments of the group, not of single individuals. The impression is one of frantic, desperate emergency; we can visualize the spacious chamber being evacuated in a matter of seconds. Even the language, the rhythmic double adjectives, force us to read the paragraph rapidly, almost holding our breath, and paralleling the urgency felt by the hapless revellers.

In "The Masque of the Red Death" we are aware of the outward appearance of the intruder, and realize the reasons for the horror and disgust. On the other hand, in both "Journal of a Solitary Man" and "The Outsider," we are at first allowed only to observe the reactions of the crowd but not the fear-producing object; part of the effect depends on our discovering the reasons for the abnormal loathing. In both the Lovecraft and the Hawthorne tale, it is the narrator himself who is the source of panic, but in "The Outsider" he is not aware of this circumstance. As he stands "alone and dazed" in the promptly abandoned room (and castle), listening to the "vanishing echoes" of the "horde of delirious fugitives," he has no inkling as to his role in triggering the scene of terror, and trembles at the thought of what might have precipitated such a manifestation of mass insanity.

While the panic and the final confrontation with the intruder provide the main impact and the denouement in Poe's story, and the narrator's perception of himself in the mirror the conclusion of the Hawthorne fragment, the main part of Lovecraft's story is still to come. Lovecraft goes on to portray the outsider's intense horror, loathing, and

disgust as he beholds "in full, frightful vividness" the image in the mirror that he mistakes for a "golden-arched doorway." What he sees is "a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable," a "putrid, dripping eidolon . . . a[n] abhorrent travesty on the human shape." Then follows the "soul-annihilating" experience of recognition, as his fingers touch the mirror--a scene of agony and despair much more intense than the delirious reaction of the terrified crowd, for while the latter know that the source of horror is external, the narrator/intruder has discovered the monster within, from which there is no escape. Lovecraft has given us horror upon horror, making it each time more personal, more psychological.

As we examine the panic scene in each of the three stories, we notice that Poe's apparition elicits horror, Hawthorne's fear, and Lovecraft's abject terror. Poe's crowd is disgusted, angry, and horrified; Hawthorne's is frightened yet curious; Lovecraft's is delirious and insanely hysterical. We are horrified by the Red Death, perceiving at the same time the ironic justice of the situation. We are horrified but at the same time amused by the plight of the solitary man, caught promenading in his shroud. We are also horrified by the outsider, and yet at the same time we feel pity and compassion for this awfully pathetic creature in search of the light and gaiety that can never be his.

Poe, Hawthorne, and Lovecraft handled a similar scene quite differently. Each painted a unique portrait with masterly strokes; each achieved a different, yet poignant effect. Lovecraft's apparition, judging by the response of its audience, is the more terrifying one, but in

the end he forces us to empathize with the monster. Hawthorne's fragment shows the better characterization--we can visualize his individuals and are touched by their different reactions to the same horrifying stimulus. Poe's vision is the more somber one, and the only one in which the entire crowd is destroyed in a final confrontation with death. Poe's horror is external; Hawthorne's and Lovecraft's internal. In Poe's story the source of horror is death, in Hawthorne's and Lovecraft's the perception of being dead. But while the solitary man can escape from his dream, Lovecraft's character has tasted "the bitterness of alienage" and knows that he will always be an outsider, "a stranger in this century

and among those who are still men."

Each writer achieved his own unique and successful variation on a theme, subordinating a scene to his own ultimate goal and purpose. Each attempted to "touch the soul" in his own way. If Lovecraft seems to succeed better, it is perhaps not so much the result of his more intense panic scene as of his ability to get us to identify and empathize with the narrator. We are touched not only by the crowd's shocking hysteria, but by the tragic condition of the hapless intruder, and by the realization that he and we are one.

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# MOSIG AT LAST

## MY YEARS WITH THE GREATEST OF LOVECRAFT SCHOLARS

By S. T. Joshi

I should hardly exaggerate if I were to declare Dirk W. Mosig not merely the greatest Lovecraft scholar of all time but the central and indispensable figure in the transition of Lovecraft studies from the avocation of frequently incompetent fans to a real scholarly discipline. It is nearly impossible nowadays to understand what a revolution Mosig produced when he began to publish his articles in the early 1970s: here at last was a real scholar understanding the profundity and dignity of Lovecraft's work and exploring his subject to a degree of precision and comprehensiveness not even imaginable by the valiant but critically inept August Derleth, to say nothing of the legions of bumbling fans to whom the task of Lovecraft criticism had been entrusted since Lovecraft's death. This is not quite to say that Mosig singlehandedly created Lovecraft studies as from the head of Zeus; rather, drawing upon the few advances made in previous decades--especially by George T. Wetzel, Matthew H. Onderdonk, Fritz Leiber, and a few others--Mosig produced not merely a synthesized and all-embracing view of Lovecraft the man, writer, and thinker, but blazed trails in countless new directions--trails which he never followed up due to his abrupt departure from formal Lovecraft studies in 1979. It was left to his many colleagues to pursue these unexplored avenues, but this could not have been done without his initial guidance. Indeed, Mosig's

influence upon the field may be more significant in his private encouragement and correspondence than in his actual published work; and I know that he almost singlehandedly molded me from complete critical naivete in Lovecraftdom to whatever little competence I have. Even now in much of my work I am merely following up leads and pursuing ideas which Mosig first suggested and which, I am sure, he could elaborate much better than I. I remain his pupil in Lovecraft studies, and shall probably always do so.

Mosig's output in Lovecraft studies was stupefyingly diverse, although much of it has now lapsed into obscurity. He had a hand in every department of Lovecraftian research, and his very wide correspondence with foreign critics and editors not merely allowed him to acquire the greatest collection of foreign Lovecraftiana in the world (now in the John Hay Library of Brown University), but to influence foreign work in Lovecraft. His involvement with the Italian Lovecraft movement was especially close, as witness the significant help he lent to the two volumes of Lovecraft's revisions, *Nelle spire di Medusa* (1976) and *Sfida dall'infinito* (1976), and the anthology *I miti di Cthulhu* (1975), where his legendary "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" was first published in an Italian translation. In June 1977 Mosig was invited to go to the International Lovecraft Symposium at Trieste, a landmark in the foreign

recognition of Lovecraft. He was at work on editing a collection of Lovecraft's essays for Italian translation; a project which was stalled through financial difficulties from the publisher, Fanucci Editore, and finally dropped when Mosig retired from the field. He was also in touch with important German and Spanish critics, and translated some foreign articles into English so as to reveal the fertile criticism of Lovecraft being produced throughout Europe.

In this country Mosig not only wrote many articles but edited twenty-four issues of The Miskatonic for the Esoteric Order of Dagon amateur press association, plus lesser journals for the Necronomicon and REHUPA associations. I shall discuss Mosig's articles later, but I may remark that The Miskatonic is without question the most distinguished and informative amateur journal on Lovecraft ever to be issued. I certainly looked forward to the appearance of every issue, and even now take occasion to reread them, always finding new insights. It is here that Mosig revealed the encyclopaedic intellect which was his closest link with Lovecraft; within these pages one can find not only stimulating discussions of Lovecraft, but--especially in some lengthy mailing comments addressed to other members--brilliant discourses on philosophy, literature, psychology, and any number of other subjects. Shortly after receiving these issues I remarked on his stupendous intellectual scope, to which he replied with characteristic modesty that he was a mere "intellectual pygmy" in comparison to Lovecraft; but if so, I wonder where that puts the rest of us.

I think the above gives a general introduction to Dirk Mosig's activities, and I should like to devote the

rest of this article to recounting my relations with him and his effect upon my own Lovecraftian work. I first heard of Dirk in September 1975, when Randy Everts mentioned him to me as the leading Lovecraft scholar of the day. I had then written only a few (very poor) articles on Lovecraft, but had in July 1975 begun compiling the anthology which would eventually appear as H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism (1980). Needless to say, I wished to include some articles by Dirk, and wrote to him to that effect in October 1975. He replied immediately (as was customary with him), sending me about half-a-dozen articles of his; it was these articles--particularly "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker," "The Prophet from Providence," "The Four Faces of 'The Outsider,'" and others--which produced such a revolution in my outlook on Lovecraft, and made me realize how far I had to go in understanding Lovecraft's life and work. (Recall that I was just over 17 at the time.) I selected three of his articles for my book--"Myth-Maker," "'The White Ship': A Psychological Odyssey," and "Toward a Greater Appreciation of H. P. Lovecraft: The Analytical Approach," although my publishers ultimately made me exclude the last one. But from that time on Dirk and I engaged in a copious and regular correspondence which ceased only in 1979. I must have five hundred pages of correspondence from him; and even though toward the last he announced to his correspondents that he would be compelled to limit his letters to one page, he rarely did so with me. I could sense, of course, that he enjoyed carrying on this voluminous correspondence in imitation of Lovecraft's similar epistolary habits, but he also had a thorough zest for discussing his favorite subject and for

helping less experienced and less intelligent enthusiasts advance in their understanding of Lovecraft. It is this correspondence, more than the thousands of pages of Lovecraft criticism I have read by other hands, that made me the scholar I have become. With Dirk I enrolled, as it were, in an extensive tutelage in Lovecraft studies--I learned more from him than all other sources combined.

At the time when I first began corresponding with Dirk, I was working not only on the Four Decades but also on a general study called H. P. Lovecraft; A Critical Analysis. This volume was, in fact, a complete revision of an 82-page work which had by some miracle been accepted for publication by the disreputable Shroud Publishers (Ken Kreuger) of North Hollywood, California. This monograph--which would make Schweitzer's Dream Quest of H. P. Lovecraft seem like a masterwork of critical virtuosity--fortunately never appeared, since Krueger eventually fled south of the border and is now happily publishing pornography. I believe he still has my treatise, and could probably bankrupt me through blackmail to ensure its total suppression. Dirk never read this work, but I constantly sent him chapters of my new and revised version (which, I think, reached some 150 to 200 pages at its apex) as I finished them. Even though these too were very amateurish, Dirk would patiently correct mistakes and suggest alternative interpretations to individual tales or passages. This criticism was invaluable to me, and made me realize how inadequate and superficial was my grasp of Lovecraft. Even as I continued to write I could sense how deeply I was profiting by Dirk's comments; indeed, although Dirk was in no way harsh in his

criticism (even though many of my remarks must have been so fatuous as to deserve stern rebuke), I eventually became so depressed at the inadequacies that Dirk was pointing out that I suspended work on the treatise and finally discarded it. (I later discovered that Dirk had kept copies of every chapter I had sent, and very likely he still has this repudiated early work of mine.)

The year 1976 brought much exciting news. I first learned in April that I had been accepted into Brown University, so that I would be able to pore over its rich holdings of Lovecraftiana for at least four years (as it turned out, I stayed there six years and gained both the BA and MA in Classics); then in May I was asked by the Kent State University Press (who, I am sure, did not then realize that I was not yet 18) to compile a new bibliography of Lovecraft. I had asked Kent whether they wished to publish the Four Decades, but they declined and instead suggested that I produce a bibliography for their distinguished Serif Series. I accepted the offer for two reasons: one, I felt that I would myself do little of the compilation, instead acting merely as a sort of glorified secretary as others sent me information; and two, I in my naivete did not begin to realize the gargantuan nature of the task. My initial plan was generally this: the task of cataloguing Lovecraft's work in English would be turned over to Tom Collins, since I heard that he was already compiling a new bibliography of Lovecraft; Dirk would, logically enough, be in charge of foreign Lovecraftiana; and I would supervise the compilation of Lovecraft criticism. Hence in the early stages I did little but concentrate on the criticism chapter; I received, however, no word from Collins, so eventually

took up the English-language publications of Lovecraft as well. In the meantime I had gotten in touch (generally at Dirk's suggestion) with other scholars who would lend much assistance to the bibliography--David E. Schultz, Kenneth W. Faig, George Wetzell, Ken Neily, Marc A. Michaud, and several others. (I may add that Dirk also first put me in touch with Vernon Shea, with whom I carried on a rewarding correspondence from 1976 to his sudden death in 1981.) When I got to Brown in September 1976 work toward both the Four Decades and the bibliography was much facilitated. Dirk, however, did not send me much information in regard to foreign Lovecraftiana, probably because he was simply overwhelmed at the task of recording it. I knew that he spent some six hours a day in correspondence alone, to say nothing of his regular teaching, karate, and critical work in Lovecraft. Eventually Dirk invited me to visit his home in Americus, Georgia, and to catalogue his collection for the bibliography. I accepted this offer with alacrity, and made plans to visit him in late June and early July of 1977.

That visit was one of the most memorable incidents of my entire life. Dirk had previously been kind enough to publish my article, "Lovecraft Criticism: A Study," in The Miskatonic (February 1977), and our correspondence had become very heavy, frequent, and cordial. I still looked upon him as my mentor, but was at least able to supply him with odd bits of Lovecraftiana in exchange for the knowledge he was imparting to me. In particular, at his and Scott Connors' suggestion I began in early 1977 to collate Lovecraft's printed texts with the manuscripts at the John Hay Library, and to my horror discovered appalling corruptions in

the Arkham House versions. I accordingly passed on lists of errata to Dirk as I corrected each work; I was also busy transcribing unpublished essays and poems by Lovecraft in the John Hay Library, and would pass these along as well. And so, after this heavy exchange of information, we would finally meet.

I arrived in the bus station at Americus very late one evening in late June, and was met there by Dirk, Joe Moudry, and a few lesser Lovecraftians. As soon as we got my belongings into the car we began a spirited discussion of matters Lovecraftian (I particularly remember discussing the copyright status of Supernatural Horror in Literature) a discussion which continued as we reached Dirk's home (where his charming wife Edna and their three daughters welcomed us) and which did not terminate until about 4 a.m. I was of course physically tired from the long ride, but was as intellectually stimulated as I had ever been--this was my first chance to talk in person with other Lovecraft scholars, especially with such a titan as Dirk. Moudry left the next morning and I did not meet him again, but for the next week I stayed at Dirk's home cataloguing his collection while he left for work in the mornings and returned in the evenings. I believe I stayed a total of about ten or eleven days--and even then I didn't quite finish going through his entire collection! At various times Dirk took me to his office in the Psychology Department at Georgia Southwestern College (he also showed me his mailbox at the department, which was as large as that for the rest of the department combined), to some Civil War sites near his home, and elsewhere. Several evenings we spent laboriously annotating our copies of the Arkham House editions of Love-

craft as I supplied the corrected texts. Dirk frequently winced at the grotesque errors, especially in At the Mountains of Madness; after we had posted the 1500 corrections to this work, Dirk said to me: "I now have a new novel by Lovecraft to read." At last I departed, but hoped it would not be the last time I would meet Dirk in person.

As it happened I would meet him thrice more, each time at conventions. In early 1978 Dirk suggested that I be invited to speak on a panel discussion on Lovecraft at the 38th World Science Fiction Convention in Phoenix that September. I accordingly received an invitation from the convention committee, and eventually (after persuading my parents to expend the money for plane fare, hotel room, and other incidentals) agreed to attend. I later learned that Don Burleson (with whom I had not yet begun to correspond) would also be on the panel, along with Vernon Shea. (At the last moment the committee hastily added Fritz Leiber in order to attract an audience.) By this time, of course, I was giving much assistance to Marc Michaud and the Necronomicon Press, and in August 1978 my first volume had appeared--the Uncollected Prose and Poetry of Lovecraft. I had that summer written the introduction to the Lovecraft bibliography, and when I sent it about to colleagues I was astonished to learn that Dirk considered it the finest general article on Lovecraft ever written. Fortunately I did not take this exaggerated praise at face value.

In any case I made the long plane ride from Indianapolis to Phoenix in early September; not more than ten minutes had passed since I checked into my room when I received a telephone call from Dirk inviting me to his own room. I went there forthwith, and met for the first time Don

Burleson, Bill Hart, Crispin Burnham, and several other Lovecraftians. The poet Keith Daniels was also in our crowd, but I had met him in Providence some time before. That convention was probably still the most entertaining I have ever attended; highlighted by a hilarious attempt by us Lovecraftians to enter and poke fun at a Baptist revival meeting not far from the convention. I'm amazed we were not lynched at this affair, since some of the things Dirk said to a church member were outrageously blasphemous. (Baptist: "Haven't you heard of the Bible?" Dirk: "Haven't you heard of the Necronomicon?") I also remember the whole gang walking some two miles to a Spanish restaurant which had been recommended to Dirk.

The panel itself was one of the most successful I have ever been on, although my own contributions were very poor. Fritz began the panel, since he had to leave shortly thereafter to attend another one; I was next, and then Don, Dirk, and Vernon Shea. Dirk was in his prime, and proclaimed with almost evangelical zeal the worth of Lovecraft as a writer and his greatness as a human being. The panel was to have concluded with the showing of one of the wretched Lovecraft films, but fortunately the film did not arrive and the panel simply continued--for a total of three hours. We received some highly intelligent questions from the floor (I recall being asked in what way my bibliography would differ from that of Owings-Chalker, to which I replied that it would in the first place be approximately twelve times the size of Owings-Chalker--a prediction which turned out to be literally correct), and none of the audience left until we all agreed to stop.

The next time I met Dirk was not

so cordial, but was still very enjoyable. It was at the 5th World Fantasy Convention in Providence in October 1979. By this time Dirk had already virtually abandoned the field, and had given up most of his correspondence. My bibliography was nearly finished, and I had put the finishing touches on it that summer (although I was later asked to make extensive revisions, which I did in a frenetic three weeks in March 1980); the Four Decades had been accepted for publication in November 1978 by the Ohio University Press, although it would not appear for nearly two years. One incident which had caused a certain coldness between myself and Dirk was my formation of Lovecraft Studies. Some time earlier (perhaps in early 1978) Dirk, Marc Michaud, and I had attempted to establish a real scholarly journal with the backing of Brown University; and although Marc and I actually discussed the project with a very responsive official of the Brown University Administration, the project eventually lapsed. I still think it was far too early to attempt such a journal; even Brown, I suspect, would not in the end have lent financial or eventitular support, and certainly would not have let the thing be run by two undergraduates, however precocious. When in early 1979 Marc and I revived the idea and decided to publish the journal merely through Necronomicon Press, Dirk was strongly opposed; remarking (perhaps justly) that the world did not need another Lovecraft journal published nonprofessionally and without academic backing. I was distressed at his opposition, but felt that the journal would at least serve to get scholarly Lovecraft criticism issued regularly to those who could profit from it. Even now I do not believe a university would lend back-

ing to Lovecraft Studies, and probably will not do so for another decade.

In any case, Dirk invited myself, Don Burleson, and Marc Michaud to appear on a panel at the convention. This one did not go nearly as well as the Phoenix one, largely due to technical foul-ups which reduced our available time by nearly half; but I managed to make a general exposition of textual problems in Lovecraft and concluded by pillorying Collins' A Winter Wish--a rather awkward thing, since unbeknownst to me Collins was in the audience. I do not recall what Dirk said, but do not think it was very memorable.

The Winter Wish fiasco might deserve some comment. When this volume appeared in late 1977, I immediately undertook to examine its textual soundness; and to my dismay discovered that whole couplets and lines had been dropped, bizarre misreadings made, and in general a very shoddy editorial procedure had been employed. Dirk agreed to publish my review--which consisted of two pages of general comment and eleven pages of errata--in The Miskatonic for February 1978, and its publication stirred an immediate uproar throughout the whole Lovecraft circle. The field quite literally split into pro-Joshi and anti-Joshi factions, and the bitterness was not lessened by vituperative attacks on personalities hurled by both sides. Throughout the whole feud Dirk faithfully stood by me, and constantly urged Collins and Stuart Schiff (who published the volume) to issue an errata sheet; this was the brunt of a brief issue of The Miskatonic (No. 23 1/2) issued in late 1979. It was, of course, all to no avail, but I was certainly grateful for Dirk's support.

My last meeting with Dirk was at the 6th World Fantasy Convention in

Baltimore in October 1980. By this time everyone knew that Dirk had withdrawn from the field and would probably do so permanently. I admit that I initially felt very angry and resentful at Dirk's decision, precisely because I realized that he had made me the scholar I was and that I would be losing touch with a man whom I had come to regard almost as a sort of benevolent uncle--perhaps like Lovecraft's uncle F. C. Clark who did so much to improve Lovecraft as poet and prose stylist. Dirk's ceasing of correspondence with me did not help matters, so that when I met him I was in no mood to be cordial. But I found that he was still the warm and genial associate I had known before, and I ended up spending much time with him at the convention; the more so since other of his colleagues--even Vernon Shea, perhaps Dirk's closest friend--seemed to be making a point of avoiding him. I recall a very engaging dinner with him, his lovely daughter Laila, and George Wetzel at a Chinese restaurant; needless to say, Lovecraft was not the central topic of conversation.

Dirk's sudden departure from the field caused a certain awkwardness, since he left behind several unfulfilled obligations; not only was he to have written the volume on Lovecraft for Twayne's United States Authors Series, but also the Lovecraft volume for the Starmont Reader's Guides and three articles on Lovecraft for the Salem Press Survey of Science Fiction Literature. Dirk had written part of the first of these articles, but then handed the project over to Don Burleson, who dashed off the rest in a miraculous two and a half days. Don was also appointed by Dirk to take over the Twayne volume, but it was anomalously given to Barton L. St. Armand. I got the

Starmont project, and dispensed with it in the summer of 1981; it appeared in November 1982.

I think it is time to return to Dirk's published work. I shall not try to display its merits, for they are obvious to any informed reader; rather, I hope to record their role in shaping my view of Lovecraft. As I read and re-read these articles, my whole understanding of Lovecraft was deepened and widened. It was from these articles, and Dirk's personal guidance through correspondence, that I began to realize the value of Lovecraft's letters for the interpretation of his fiction, and that one must make an attempt to harmonize the views expressed in his letters with those expressed in his fiction (Barton St. Armand has yet to adopt this stance, although I believe he is almost alone in regarding Lovecraft as an "aesthetic schizophrenic" who expounded one philosophy in his life and letters and another in his fiction); from Dirk I learned the importance and profundity of Lovecraft's mechanistic materialist philosophy, and have now gone on and tried to probe it further myself (Dirk himself, I believe, accepted the major tenets of Lovecraft's philosophy, as I do; so that we could both be called "Lovecraftians" in the same way that a follower of Nietzsche's philosophy is a "Nietzschean"); from Dirk I learned that the whole of Lovecraft's output--fiction, poetry, essays, letters, and the most ephemeral jottings and marginalia--must be synthesized into a coherent whole; from Dirk I came to gain an increasing respect for Lovecraft the man, and to see that many of the standard criticisms of his character--his "reclusiveness," his "eccentricity," his "racism," and the like--were either with-

(continued on page 23)

# THE MAN WHO WAS MOSIG

By Peter Cannon

I hadn't heard of Dirk Mosig, arguably the most formidable Lovecraftian of his day, until I met him in Providence in the fall of '75 at the first World Fantasy Convention. Although I'd written on HPL as both an undergraduate and graduate student, apart from Brown's Barton St. Armand I was ignorant of who was currently producing serious Lovecraft criticism. Speaking with Dirk, I was delighted to learn of his own activity in the field and of the work of others.

Writing him soon after the convention, I received an almost instant reply, typed on his distinctive Miskatonic Literary Circle stationery, with HPL's silhouette in red. For the next fifteen months we corresponded on matters Lovecraftian, exchanging a total of nearly three dozen letters apiece. I've not corresponded at such a pace with anyone before or since.

Dirk generously sent me copies of his superb Miskatonic, and explained what exactly the Esoteric Order of Dagon amateur press association was and how I could join. He criticized in detail my senior honors essay on Lovecraft, a copy of which I provided him. At his urging I paid my first call on Frank Belknap Long, a fellow dweller on Manhattan's West Side. He put a young scholar named S. T. Joshi in touch with me. In short, Dirk introduced me to the modern world of Lovecraft studies. For this I'll be always grateful.

Realizing that I was just one of many Lovecraftian correspondents, I was all the more impressed that he consistently responded within a few days to my letters. Clearly he enjoyed emulating HPL in maintaining a large correspondence. As 1976

rolled on, however, I began to detect signs of strain. Dirk indicated that he was discontent at Georgia Southwestern College (Jimmy Carter's alma mater), and was seeking a position with another university. Due to lack of time he had to mail out a number of form letters to the members of his epistolary circle. HPL after all had been self-employed, a bachelor for all but two years of his life. Dirk on the other hand had a wife and three daughters to support and was a full-time professor of psychology. I sensed that his fanatical pursuit of HPL may not have been entirely compatible with the demands of his familial and professional responsibilities.

In the winter of '77 I stopped writing Dirk. He might welcome one less correspondent, I figured, and in any event I was about to enter the ranks of the Esoteric Order of Dagon where I knew I could keep up contact. Once I saw the average quality of the contributions to the EOD I appreciated further how fine a "fanzine" The Miskatonic was. It was regrettable indeed that Dirk would later leave the EOD as a result of some unpleasantness within the order.

I ran into Dirk in '79 at the fantasy convention in Providence, and the following year at the one in Baltimore, where he was selling off his Lovecraft collection. Perhaps sort of like Bobby Fisher after winning the world chess championship, Dirk was retiring from the scene while he was on top. While we may lament that too intense a devotion to HPL led to this premature withdrawal, Dirk Mosig remains the father to us all today who aspire to write decent Lovecraft criticism.

# FRA MOSIGIUS

By Donald R. Burleson

I owe much of my own personal involvement in the world of Lovecraft scholarship to Dr. Dirk W. Mosig, because before I met him I worked almost entirely in vacuo. It was his friendship which pulled me into the circle of acquaintances I now enjoy.

I was in attendance at the fabled First World Fantasy Convention in Providence, Halloween 1975, and at that time had already been a student of Lovecraft's life and work for twenty years but, as I said, had not had the acquaintance of other serious Lovecraftians--with the exception that I had been corresponding with Frank Belknap Long since 1970. Dirk was there in 1975 at the con, of course, defending HPL with impressive eloquence. For some reason, due perhaps to my own shyness at the time (a quality which I suppose I no longer possess), I did not actually meet or talk with Dirk at the con; I had dinner with Frank Long and met Willis Conover, Robert Bloch, Sprague deCamp, and others, but only heard Dirk speak, not striking up an acquaintance at that time.

However, that acquaintance was not long in coming. Soon after the convention, Frank Long's book Dreamer on the Nightside came out, and Dirk noticed Frank's kind mention of me on p. 12 and wrote to Frank asking for my address. It was not long before I heard from Dirk, receiving copies of his Miskatonic beginning, I believe, with about mailing #12. There ensued some three years of heavy correspondence, in which Dirk and I exchanged some six or seven letters a month--letters filled with Lovecraftian criticism,

interpretation, and biographical discussion, on both sides. Dirk's voluminous letters were invariably erudite, witty, illuminating, with a scholarly zeal nicely balanced with his delectably bizarre sense of humor. Just before he left Georgia Southwestern for Kearney State College in Nebraska, I sent him the appropriately Lovecraftian gift of a kitten which he promptly named Sam Perkins and, no doubt, duly introduced to his two dozen tarantulas. Dirk and I talked on the phone soon after that. The blizzard of letters continued, both parties often sending photocopied Lovecraftiana of one kind or another. I contributed to Dirk's all-encompassing HPL collection such arcana as a phial of water from the West River in Vermont (see "The Whisperer in Darkness"). Dirk was truly the Lovecraft completist, and I regret deeply that I never saw his collection, which was later sold and scattered about.

It was through Dirk that I first met and became friends with a number of very important Lovecraftians, for in 1978 he invited me to come out to Phoenix to be on the Lovecraft panel (my first) that he was moderating at the World Science Fiction Convention (Iguanacon); there I first met the other panelists S. T. Joshi, Fritz Leiber, and the late J. Vernon Shea, and met such other folks as Keith Daniels, Crispin Burnham, Bob Eber, Bill and Jean Hart. This all led to a continuing correspondence with some of them, in particular Vernon and S. T., and through S. T. I would soon meet Marc Michaud, Ken Neily, and others of the Providence gang. I was in vacuo no more,

and I owe that to Dirk. But mainly I remember all the crazy antics of the Phoenix con, with Dirk in the dead center of most of them. We all marched in solemn single file through the mezzanine of the hotel chanting "Yog-Sothoth"; Dirk would later remark to me in a letter that when he wrote up a description of his activities in Phoenix for his dean, he omitted some details, so as "not to encumber the narrative."

As is well known, by the time of the 1979 World Fantasy Convention in Providence, Dirk was already in the unfortunate process of making an exit from Lovecraft scholarship, but he was there, again moderating an HPL panel consisting of S. T., Marc, and myself. It was at this convention that I met the lady who is now my wife. Ultimately, it was Howard Phillips Lovecraft who brought Mollie and me together--that brought us all together--but Dirk, even at that late date in his Lovecraftian career, played a big part just in organizing the panel. (It was Vernon who actually introduced Mollie to me.) Dirk was selling his enormous HPL collection, and though I hated to see him do it, and said so, I purchased a few items myself, as much to place them in caring hands as out of any acquisitiveness as such. I know very well how painful it was for Dirk to part with the Lovecraftian treasures he had accumulated over the years, particularly the holograph letters.

Dirk's leaving the field was a most sad development, for he contributed monumentally to furthering the cause of directing serious critical attention to HPL. As a Jungian-archetypal critic, he had some extremely powerful insights into Lovecraft's works. I could not always agree on every point--at times Dirk seemed unwilling to recognize any-

thing less than brilliant in HPL, as when he praised all of the poetry--but literary criticism is a field in which no two people ever wholly agree anyway. Overall, Dirk's critical and interpretative insights were magnificent. It is incontrovertible that Dirk Mosig's contributions to Lovecraft scholarship are enormous. His leaving the field is highly lamentable; he is missed, and I think we should all welcome his return, were that to come to pass.

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# R'lyeh Review

## H. P. Lovecraft: Re-Animator

(Reviewed by Allen Koszowski)

I despise this cinematic piece of garbage. I cannot, without resorting to profanity, be more blunt than that. When this film, without any advance notice of which I was aware, appeared in my area I was eager to see it. A new film based on LOVECRAFT! Like a horse at the starting gate I couldn't wait to race to the theatre, and hopefully enjoy, for once, a decent adaptation of Lovecraft. My mistake.

This film, supposedly adapted from Lovecraft's "Herbert West - Reanimator," is about as far from the real thing as one can get. Lovecraft, I feel certain, would have been outraged by this movie, and demanded that his name be removed from the credits. The makers of this film lack creativity, unless you feel that finding new ways in which to gross out an audience is creative. I'm one of those people who are violently opposed to the gore and slasher brand of horror films. Mostly they are junk, but I enjoyed Halloween, and I can find merit in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and The Evil Dead among others. But the makers of this film are completely manipulative and calculating in their efforts to put us off. They shun artistry. They are, in fact, hoping to do nothing more than to make a fast buck by using the respected name of Lovecraft and linking it to the current trend to gore in horror movies. It really is saddening. I would have loved nothing more than to report that this film is a huge critical and artistic success and to wish equal success financially.

However, in the case of this film, I hope and pray that Re-Animator fails miserably at the box-office. God forbid we should suffer more of the same.

There have been Lovecraft adaptations in the past, of course. The Dunwich Horror, The Haunted Palace, The Shuttered Room come readily to mind, but these, among others, have never really succeeded in capturing the essence of Lovecraft's fiction--much the same as filmmakers have difficulty in grasping the spirit of Ray Bradbury's unique brand of storytelling. But at least those past attempts were reasonably honest in intention. The same cannot be said for Re-Animator. In this film all subtlety vanishes, taking a backseat to the gore craze and sledgehammer approach to horror. Atmosphere, important I feel to most great horror fiction, is nonexistent. Instead we are treated to buckets of blood, maimings, decapitations, etc., etc., etc. In that respect this film is a gore fan's delight. I prefer intelligence, a commodity this film lacks.

And, as you would expect in this enlightened age, we must have sex. Here's an example: a naked woman is forced to spread her quivering thighs so that a severed head, alive and dripping with gore, may perform oral sex on her. And they have the audacity to link Lovecraft to this junk! Actually the fact that filmmakers continue to pass crap like this on to the public (and make money!) is far more frightening than any Lovecraft story. The newspaper ads for Re-Animator fail to give it a rating. I assume this is because the makers, rather than cut their film in order to avoid an X-rating, chose

not to put it before the ratings board. This should say enough concerning their integrity.

I'm still anticipating the day when some gifted filmmaker will adapt one of Lovecraft's stories in a manner that does both credit. Can you imagine what wonderful films, say, for instance, "The Shadow out of Time" or "The Shadow over Innsmouth" could become if handled by those who cared for the subject matter? Well, we can keep hoping. In the meantime avoid Re-Animator. It is a degrading experience. I made the mistake of shelling out my money to see this demented film, money that would have been better spent extending my subscription to Crypt of Cthulhu. Don't make the same mistake.

[Editor's Note: If you have read Lovecraft only in paperback, you will not have read "Herbert West-Reanimator," unless you have managed to find a copy of Michael Parry (ed.), Rivals of Frankenstein (Corgi, 1977). You will be interested to know that the tale will soon be available as a booklet from Necronomicon Press. And of course you can still find it in the Arkham House collection Dagon and Other Macabre Tales.]

Richard A. Lupoff, Lovecraft's Book, Arkham House, 1985. 260 pp.  
\$15. 95.

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

In author Lupoff's so-called "Compiler's Note" at the beginning of this novel he recalls how he had been a fan of Lovecraft's fiction ever since his first encounter with it. "My interest in Lovecraft remained purely literary, however, until the publication of his selected letters be-

ginning in 1965." Lupoff's experience conforms to a pattern among Lovecraftians, it seems to me. At first one reads the stories for their own sake, and then one becomes curious about the man who wrote them, perhaps curious enough to read some of those volumes of letters if perchance they might shed some light on this or that point of one's favorite Lovecraft tale. And then one discovers just how fascinating a character Lovecraft himself was, fiction or no fiction.

The inevitable result of this process was that Lovecraft, "his own fantastic creation" would become a character in stories. One might trace the beginnings of this phenomenon back to stories written by HPL's youthful correspondents and admirers, beginning with Robert Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars" and Frank Belknap Long's "The Space-Eaters," where Lovecraft appears pitted against supernatural entities like those he wrote about. This device is essentially "fannish" and reminds me of the letters "Candid Camera" used to receive asking why they didn't try to surprise Allen Funt himself with one of their sneaky stunts. Of course, this is not to imply that it hasn't been brought off well. For more recent examples, also both well done, see L. Sprague deCamp's "Balsamo's Mirror" and Karl Edward Wagner's "Sticks," which features HPL coming back from the dead to sell more stories!

But Lupoff's book Lovecraft's Book represents a new wrinkle in the genre. There is no supernatural menace at all. Rather, the story centers about the fascinating life and associations of HPL. The book momentarily assumes the pose of a "docudrama" reconstructing the events surrounding an actual attempt by pro-Hitler organizers to get elo-

quent racist Lovecraft to write a propaganda tract. Lupoff implies he is uncovering a real adventure deduced by reading between the lines of Lovecraft's letters and the recollections of HPL's friends. Of course that is not the case. What Lupoff has actually done is to imagine an adventure which lay potential in the many and peculiar facets of Lovecraft's life, and to conjure it into an imaginary actuality. It is the kind of thing that just could have happened had someone stirred up, in a certain way, the volatile mix that was Lovecraft.

The novel itself is absorbing, not only because of the use of favorite fantasy writers (Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith make cameo appearances) as characters (REH's chapter is a lot of fun, though it may make the Cross Plains Cimmerician out to be even loonier than he was). Lupoff's story is a satisfying mystery with action and intrigue aplenty. The style is crisp, the period references natural and authentic. The characters are portrayed well, and Lupoff does a particularly good job with the star, HPL himself. Only one real problem here: he has HPL sipping up wine, martinis, bourbon, yielding up his teetotalist convictions when only gently prodded. I suspect Lupoff did this as a nudge in the ribs to any reader stupid enough not to get the joke otherwise. One historical problem, too: Lovecraft's admiration for Adolf Hitler and Mein Kampf lasted longer than this book implies. But so what?

The question inevitably arises: how would HPL have reacted to seeing Lovecraft's Book? But what I'd pay to see is August Derleth's reaction. It is real historical irony that Arkham House should publish a novel the central thesis of which is Lovecraft's race hatred, one of the nasty

facts founder Derleth in his apostolic zeal sought to mitigate or whitewash. (Would that his jealousy for Lovecraft's reputation had rather led him to abandon his wretched "posthumous collaborations" under HPL's by-line!) We can appreciate the sense of perspective shown by Derleth's successor, editor James Turner, who is serious enough about Lovecraft to undertake publication of S. T. Joshi's critical texts of Lovecraft's works on the one hand, yet good-humored enough to publish Lovecraft's Book on the other.

Lupoff's novel is actually the second of its kind. The first was Peter H. Cannon's Pulptime, an imaginary team-up between HPL and Sherlock Holmes. One can easily imagine Lupoff's reaction to reading Pulptime, which appeared some months earlier, stealing his thunder. Indeed, the two books are strongly similar, as of course they would have to be. Both make references to Prohibition and have obligatory scenes in speakeasies. Both involve a clever interweaving of biographical data drawn from the letters and memoirs with current events and fictional developments. Both remark on how Lovecraft as a child had admired Sherlock Holmes and now had a real-life chance to emulate him. And both have the victorious HPL decide to fictionalize his adventure in the form of a horror story, "The Horror at Red Hook" in Pulptime, "The Shadow over Innsmouth" in Lovecraft's Book. But of course any novel using Lovecraft as a character would have to do almost all of these things. It is interesting that whereas Cannon concentrated on one set of Lovecraft's cronies, the Kalem Club (Long, Loveman, Kleiner, Morton, etc.), Lupoff focused on the other, (e.g., Howard and Smith). The first were Lovecraft's "New York gang,"

the second his epistolary correspondents. Another, more important, difference is that once you get past the common premise, Lupoff's plot and story are more substantial than Cannon's, presumably because Cannon simply decided to let the fact of the premise carry more of the weight of the book, the actual plot and action less. Neither was this a bad approach given the use of Holmes as a character. One has the feeling that Lovecraft, Long, et al. are there primarily for the sake of meeting Holmes. Lupoff makes Lovecraft more nearly central to the events of his tale. It is an interesting coincidence that Pulptime and Lovecraft's Book appeared so near to each other. It should be enjoyable to compare them with Fred Chappell's "Weird Tales," a short story involving HPL and friends, scheduled to appear in The Year's Best Horror Stories XIII.

Ramsey Campbell, Cold Print.  
Scream Press, 1985. \$17.50.

(Reviewed by Peter Cannon)

Britisher Ramsey Campbell stands today as one of those rare horror writers (of which T. E. D. Klein is perhaps the leading American exponent) who follow in the classic tradition of H. P. Lovecraft, not by adapting the superficial trappings of the Mythos, but by focusing on the creation of mood and atmosphere, through the use of a meticulous, subtle style and careful structure. This present collection of fifteen "Mythos Cthulhu" tales (as the line on the jacket back puts it), arranged in approximate chronological order, demonstrates Campbell's development from immature imitator to sophisticated supernaturalist.

In his entertaining and informa-

tive introduction, Campbell acknowledges Lovecraft's influence and describes the background to the writing of each tale, with a comment or two on his intentions. He mentions in passing a number of stories not included here (evidently in some cases because of too strong a sadistic element), but which may well appear in future issues of Crypt of Cthulhu--to the delight of all Campbell completists, one might add. He looks back with modesty and wry good humor at the comic excesses of the teenage writer, enamored of the master's style but without any real understanding of his methods. At the same time he answers the charges against Lovecraft by the likes of Stephen King and Charles Grant, who, in dismissing him for appealing only at an adolescent level, fail to recognize his genius for generating a sense of awe or wonder in his fiction.

The early tales in this collection, taken mostly from the long out-of-print Arkham House Inhabitant of the Lake (1964), show all the marks of a juvenile neophyte. The opening story, "The Church in High Street," is full of awkward, extravagant language and not much else--an egregious example of a bad Lovecraft imitation. The revised version of a tale called "The Tomb-Herd," from which Campbell quotes generously, it was actually even worse in its original form! Campbell is grateful to August Derleth for providing editorial guidance--and for accepting it for the anthology Dark Minds, Dark Hearts. With this encouragement, he was inspired to write those works collected in The Inhabitant of the Lake. These are not as awful as "The Church in High Street"; in fact they do reveal signs of a genuine talent, but are really more of historical interest than of any intrinsic

literary value. Derleth deserves credit for recognizing the promise of the young J. Ramsey Campbell, permitting him to perform his apprenticeship in his very own Arkham House title.

Campbell first established his own distinctive voice in the nasty and sordid "Cold Print." These later tales, besides their superior craftsmanship, contain his characteristic traits: the dreary, disquieting landscapes and townscapes, the forlorn but sympathetic protagonists, the peculiar family relationships. Certain features in "The Tugging," wherein the hero from the vantage of an old sealed-up room in a furniture warehouse confronts cosmic horror at the rim of the Solar System, may evoke "The Dreams in the Witch House" or "The Haunter of the Dark" but the tale is uniquely Campbellian. Lovecraft could never have written "The Faces at Pine Dunes," about a sensitive lad who discovers that his gross, overweight father has been moving the family to remote districts of the country over the years in order to attend witches' gatherings. In "The Voice of the Beach" Campbell eschews any Mythos name-dropping, keeping the horror oblique and suggestive. It is thus in the tradition of "The Colour out of Space" or "The Willows," tales of isolation in strange natural settings, without being at all an imitation.

Cold Print is a very attractive package ("This book composed of living cells" proclaims an unobtrusive line on the front flap), generously illustrated with the unsettling collages of J. K. Potter. Jacket and endpapers are suitably sinister, as is Campbell's author photo, which makes him look as if he is on the verge of the sort of hideous transmutation so often suffered by

the people in his fiction.

This is a must volume for all Campbell and Lovecraft aficionados. And who is a fan of the one who is not a devoted disciple of the other?

Henry Kuttner, Elak of Atlantis, Gryphon Books, P. O. Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228. 210 pp. \$6.

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

Robert E. Howard was not the only pioneer of the Sword & Sorcery genre to write in the pages of Weird Tales. There was also C. L. Moore ("Jirel of Joiry") and her husband-to-be Henry Kuttner. Lin Carter even claims Kuttner played the game better than its inventor Howard. And if you think Howard's legacy of Sword & Sorcery tales is precious and too few (I do), Kuttner's is even skimpier: four novelettes of the exploits of Elak of Atlantis and two tales of Prince Raynor. Finally someone, Gary Lovisi to be specific, has managed to collect all four Elakepics in one volume. (Lin Carter tried this long ago but could make no satisfactory arrangements with the agent for Kuttner's estate. Either the latter's demands have relaxed or someone's going to be in legal trouble soon!)

Elak of Atlantis is a different kind of boon to the fantasy fan depending on which of two categories he or she falls into. If you are a fanatical collector you may already have all of the stories, but how nice to have them all in one volume to place on the shelf beside The Best of Henry Kuttner, Dr. Cyclops, et al. If you are not afflicted with the collector's curse, or simply are not close enough to a secondhand book store, this may be your first chance to read them, because the stories have up to now been reprinted in haphazard, scat-

tergun fashion.

One warning: the book is not typeset, but, rather done in the visually repulsive dot matrix gathered dot garbage spewed out by word processors. This is singularly unfortunate; it looks terrible. But it is legible, and that of course is the chief thing.

This book thinks it is offering at least one Elak story for the first time since its initial appearance in Weird Tales, but in fact "Beyond the Phoenix" has been reprinted in Peter Haining's 1976 Neville Spearman anthology Weird Tales (and in volume 1 of the Sphere 1978 paperback reprint).

Only 500 copies of this book have been printed, so in case you do not get one, here's where else to find the Elak stories. For "Beyond the Phoenix," see above. "Dragon Moon"

appeared in both L. Sprague deCamp (ed.), The Fantastic Swordsmen (Pyramid, 1967) and Hans Stefan Santessen (ed.), The Mighty Barbarians (Lancer, 1969). "The Spawn of Dagon" appeared in Leo Margulies (ed.), The Ghoul Keepers (Pyramid, 1961) and in Lin Carter (ed.), The Magic of Atlantis (Lancer, 1970). "Thunder in the Dawn" appeared in DeCamp (ed.), Warlocks and Warriors (Berkley, 1970). And while we're at it, here's where to find the two Prince Raynor stories; "Cursed be the City" appeared in Carter (ed.), The Young Magicians (Ballantine, 1969). "Citadel of Darkness" appeared in DeCamp (ed.), Swords & Sorcery (Pyramid, 1963). We figured we owed you the information since we piqued your interest in Elak.

# Truth Is Stranger Than Lovecraft

Contributed by Alan Ziebarth

George Zucco. This wonderful character, the perfect High Priest of Satanic Atlantis, he of the disturbing glassy eyes, and quick, disconcerting gestures and cat-purr voice, ended his days in the lunatic asylum, after he began believing he was the crazed villains Monogram and PRC kept paying him to play. The High Priest of Mu/Egypt/Atlantis was led away by the fellas in the white coats, dressed to the nines in borrowed Monogram bogeyman finery.

George's faithful wife and daughter moved into the asylum with him, hoping their presence would restore

his grasp on reality. Quite the contrary. George Zucco slipped away in the Atlantic fogbanks, finally, one midnight dreary, working himself into a paroxysm of fear and loathing, screaming he was being stalked by the Great God Cthulhu!

George Zucco died in the madhouse, from fright. The following midnight, Mrs. Zucco and daughter, unable to live without their meal ticket, unable to face life in Tinseltown without George, joined him in death.

--from Hollywood Babylon II,  
Kenneth Anger, pp. 289-290.



LOVECRAFT



ROBERT E.  
HOWARD

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CLARK ASHTON SMITH

# MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

I have a footnote or two to Will Murray's informative "Lovecraft in the Comics" (Crypt #30, pp. 35-37).

First, I believe the "Special HPL" issue of Heavy Metal originated in a "Special HPL" issue of the French magazine Metal Hurlant which was published, if memory serves, in 1979 and is still available from the publishers.

Second, Lovecraft has once been used as a character in a short graphic story published in French and never seen in the States (as far as I know).

This story, titled "R. H. B.," written by Francois Riviere and drawn by Andreas, was originally published in the magazine (A Suivre), then was later incorporated in the book Revelations Posthumes (1981), a collection of obscure or imagined episodes in the lives of various artists and writers, told in graphic story form. (Besides HPL, Riviere & Andreas examined the lives of Agatha Christie, Jules Verne, painter Pol Delmotte and writer Pierre Loti.) Riviere's script is a faithful account of Lovecraft's and Barlow's friendship, mainly using deCamp's biography as his source. Andreas' art work is positively stunning; his masterful use of the scratchboard technique makes for some beautiful pages.

Francois Riviere was later to publish the novel Profanations (1982), a dark fantasy tale in which Lovecraft and Barlow appear as characters, the latter more prominently. As for Andreas, he has since published five books of graphic stories which he both wrote and drew, and which are all of interest to the fantasy amateur. Rork 1: Fragments and Rork 2: Passages tell the story of a mystic man; Cromwell Stone be-

gins by a quotation from HPL and is faithful to his spirit; Cyrrus is a very elaborate time travel/paradox tale; and La Caverne du Souvenir mixes a murder mystery, theater life and Celtic myths.

As far as I know, no sample of Andreas' work has been seen in the States, though he may have been featured in an issue of Heavy Metal or two, since Cyrrus was first serialized in Metal Hurlant.

Let me end this rather lengthy note by stating that I have read all the issues of Crypt and found them informative, exciting, and sometimes quite funny. Your brand of Lovecraft scholarship is a constant source of interest (as is that of Joshi, Burleson, Michaud et al.) and it has been a great pleasure for me to introduce your productions to some of my friends and fellow Lovecraftians over here.

--Jean-Daniel Breque  
Dunkerque, France

Here's an addition to the list of Thriller episodes in "Weird Tales on Television" (Crypt #30):

"Trio for Terror" (March 14, 1961). Director: Ida Lupino. Cast: Richard Lupino (Simon), Terence deMarney (Uncle Julian), Iris Bristol (Katie), Gil Stuart (Train Guard), Nelson Welch (Doctor). Teleplay: Barre Lyndon, from Stephen Grendon's (August Derleth's) "The Extra Passenger" (January 1947). This is the first of the three stories that comprise this episode.

Corrections to the Thriller list: The teleplay for "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" was written by Barre Lyndon, not Robert Bloch. "Wax-works" was directed by Herschel Daugherty, not John Brahm. All of

the Thriller episodes adapted from Weird Tales stories were produced by William Frye.

The latest issue of the horror film magazine Fangoria (#45) reports that independent producer Fred Olen Ray is producing a "very loose adaptation" of Lovecraft's "The Tomb." The film "concerns the supernatural exploits of an Egyptian female vampire."

What's next in store for H. P. "Hollywood" Lovecraft? Perhaps The Outsider, starring Boy George. Or maybe The Thing on the Doorstep, with Elvira as Asenath Waite.

--William Fulwiler  
Duncanville, TX

I have been a great fan and reader of Crypt of Cthulhu ever since issue #1 and I think you are doing a great job. Keep up the good work.

--David Dello Monaco  
New Milford, NJ

Contrary to Brian Lumley's comment of late, I think Jason Eckhardt's art in your recent fiction issues really spruced up both issues. He is beginning to remind me--although Jason has a style all his own--of some of Denis Taini's work. In any case, I hope to see Jason do another Crypt cover soon. He's good!

--Will Murray  
North Quincy, MA

I can hardly wait for the next issue of Crypt of Cthulhu to arrive. Each one is a unique gem in the ongoing style begun by H. P. Lovecraft. Keep up the good work.

--John W. Rectenwald  
Louisville, KY

After reading #31, I don't suppose there's any way of talking Lin Carter out of using Elder Gods. Sigh!

I read in one of your Mail-Call of

Cthulhu's that a Ramsey Campbell issue is in the works. Glad to hear it.

I would like to apologize to Brian Lumley for my letter in Crypt #31. After reading through the old Crypt issues and seeing his "Interview" [#19] and his "Comments" article [#22], I got rather annoyed and was a little too vindictive in my letter. I don't agree with "demythologizing" Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, and Azathoth or with Elder Gods, but I do like Mr. Lumley's other stories. Shudde-M'ell is a nice nightmare creature and Lumley's other Mythos creations are just as intriguing. Anyway, I just wanted that to be made clear.

May Crypt last until the Old Ones wake!

Yours in the Temple of the Toad,  
--Chris Beekman  
Lake Arrowhead, CA

I've been reading your Eastertide issue [#30] and found it quite fulfilling, as usual. At any rate, I wish you would pass this info on to either your readers, Will Murray or both. Concerning HPL in the comics, Laugh in the Dark Comix, No. 1, published by Last Gasp Eco Funnies in 1971, has two Lovecraft stories. The first by artist Spain is very loosely based on "The Lurking Fear." It has a lot more action and is more "detective-adventure" oriented than the Master's story. The second is H. P. Lovecraft's "The Terrible Old Man" as drawn and interpreted by artist Larry Fuller. It is a one-page, crudely drawn but effective telling of HPL's short story. It leaves out only the old man's weird bottles with the pendulums inside. Spain's piece is nicely drawn with a lot of mood and tension.

Lovecraft, Howard, and other Weird Tales writers have been a con-

stant topic for underground comics. As a collector I've run across these titles which have Mythos, Lovecraftian, or Howardian over or undertones: Skull Comics No. 3, Skull Comics No. 6 (which features a Lovecraftian pastiche by Greg Irons, Tim Veitch, and Richard Corben), Dr. Wirtham's Comix and Stories No. 3, Star Reach No. 3, Cocaine Comix No. 3, Tales from the Leather Nun, and White Lunch Comix No. 1. Anyone wanting the publishers and other info can contact me. Most of these involve parodies, pastiches, and satires. Yet there are Lovecraftian references and Weird Talesque stories in literally hundreds of the undergrounds (which is what induced me to

collect this rapidly dying artform back when in the early 70s).

Also, here's some Mythos trivia for you. If you didn't already know: the Necronomicon by Abdhul Alhazred is mentioned in the appendix . . . as a source! -- in Michael Crichton's Eaters of the Dead, which is an excellent retelling of Beowulf from the viewpoint of a near contemporary of the Mad Arab's, an Arab who is chosen to be a diplomat, journeying with some Norsemen to their home in the cold, northern wastes. A must read put out by Knopf Publishing Company sometime in the late 70s.

--David T. Pudelwitts  
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# NEXT TIME . . .

Here at Crypt of Cthulhu we have three important rules: Never print fiction by writers who have not been published by either Arkham House or Weird Tales. Never reprint material that has appeared recently in other magazines. Never, never sink to publishing the editor's own fiction (this is enough of a vanity press operation as it is!) But next time we're flagrantly breaking all three rules to bring you the "Best of the Providence Pals":

"The Recurring Doom" by S. T. Joshi

"The Last Supper" by Donald R. Burleson

"An Echo of Pipes" by Jason C. Eckhardt

"In the Dead of the Night" by Marc A. Michaud

"Blood Atonement" by Robert M. Price

"The Madness out of Space" by Peter H. Cannon

You may feel like you do when you meet somebody on the street and you don't recognize them because you know them from another context. These guys, writing fiction? Yes, for better or for worse, as you'll see in the next issue of Crypt of Cthulhu.